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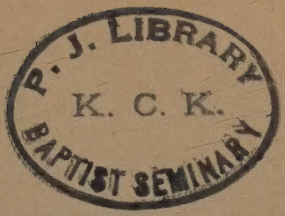

# ADVENTURE

## THE FAITH OF SCIENCE AND THE SCIENCE OF FAITH

BY

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Religion and Science

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# INTRODUCTION

THIS book is not a collection of detached essays; it is the outcome of a continued effort at corporate thinking on the nature of Science and Religion, and on their relation to one another. It is in one sense a sequel to my book *Reality*, in another it is a resumption, after a long break, of the series of books, *Concerning Prayer*, *Immortality* and *The Spirit*. Like these it arose out of the meetings for discussion that took place at the house of Miss Lily Dougall at Cumnor. By the deaths, within six months of one another, of Arthur Clutton-Brock, Cyril Emmet and Miss Dougall herself, the old 'Cumnor Group' was shattered. But it was Miss Dougall's wish that her house, Cutts End, should continue to be, in her own phrase, 'a workshop for religious thinking'; and her old friend, Miss M. S. Earp, has carried on the tradition.

Beginning in March 1924 there were arranged, at varying intervals, a number of week-end conferences of from six to eight members, made up mainly of scientists and philosophers of the post-war generation in Oxford. The discussions at these informal gatherings were greatly enriched by the presence, at one time or another, of as many as ten persons who are not contributors to this volume—including some who would dissent from certain

of its main positions. Among those whose contribution was felt to be of special value we should wish more particularly to name Dr. J. A. Hadfield, Prof. Julian Huxley (then Fellow of New College) and Prof. H. J. Paton of Glasgow (then Fellow of the Queen's College).

These conferences were held without any idea of their leading to the production of a book; they aimed merely at an interchange of views and clarification of issues. But after one that took place in October 1925 it seemed to me that among the papers which had been contributed were some which, from very different starting-points, were converging towards a new and fertile conception—or at least towards a new angle of approach to certain of the more fundamental questions involved in the relation of Science and Religion. This book has grown out of these papers—supplemented by one which approaches the problem of Morals, as that presents itself to the present age, from the same standpoint. Each essay represents in the last resort the individual view of its writer; but they have been rediscussed and subjected to further criticism at three more meetings at Cutts End, attended only by the writers and Miss Earp—as a result of which each has been at least once remodelled or rewritten.

The unifying idea which underlies all the essays is that indicated in the title of the book—the idea of 'adventure'. The present century has witnessed a very considerable change in the point of view of thinkers in regard to Science, Morals and Religion; and in different ways the dynamic and adventurous quality in these has become more evident than it was to earlier

workers. Some of the implications of this change, in its bearing on the relations of Science and Religion, I endeavoured to bring out in my book *Reality*, a few chapters of which had in draft form been read as papers, and usefully criticised, at some of the earlier conferences. Certain further implications are worked out in the present volume. The value of what we have written must be judged by others; but to us it seems that, unless our line of thought is fundamentally mistaken, the period when the 'reconciliation' of Science and Religion was something which men could regard, according to their temperaments, as a matter either for hope or for despair, is passing away—to be succeeded by a period in which they will be regarded as two diverse, but intrinsically connected, *adventures* of the spirit of man.

B. H. STREETER.

Cutts End, Cumnor,
*9th October* 1927.

# I

# THE DYNAMIC OF SCIENCE

BY

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# THE DYNAMIC OF SCIENCE

## SYNOPSIS

### The Aim of Science

Science attempts to describe the phenomena of the external world and in the widest sense to understand it. Empirical evidence is the only test of validity which it accepts. In investigation it demands freedom of opinion and of action. It is continuous: it takes over, and builds up from, all that is best in past work. The scientist's work is much more impersonal than the art of the artist or the philosophy of the philosopher.

### The Reality of Science

The reality of the scientist embraces two classes of concepts: (*a*) those directly observed by the senses, and (*b*) those inferred from them by analogy. The attitudes of the more sanguine and imaginative, and of the more critical, types of investigators contrasted. While workers of the latter type make their contribution, it is those of the former who make the great discoveries. Hypothetical waves in a hypothetical ether have led to the broadcast service of the present day.

The scientist as an investigator is not concerned with the ultimate questions of philosophy, largely because he is absorbed in his own work. He takes the world pretty much as he finds it.

### Hypotheses and Laws

He obtains knowledge of the external world by carrying out experiments, framing hypotheses to explain the results of the experiments, testing the hypotheses by further experiments, and so on. Neither hypotheses nor the widely verified hypotheses called laws are invested with the character of finality; they are subjected to never-ceasing criticism in the hope that through modification they will attain nearer to the ideal of truth.

Nature is continually being shown by the experimentalists to be more remarkable than has ever been imagined. Every new discovery contains something completely unexpected. The discoveries of the elements selenium and radium are quoted in illustration of this.

### The Assumptions in Experiment

Three assumptions are customarily made when experiments are carried out: (1) that there is a reign of law, (2) that the working of the whole is deducible from an investigation of the smallest parts, (3) that the simplest interpretation of experimental facts is likely to be the nearest to the truth. The second and third of these are illustrated by examples from contemporary science. There are cases of alternative hypotheses, however, where the ultimate victory of one appears to be impossible. In such cases a completely new theory is necessary and something like genius is required to formulate it.

### Adventure in Science

Science at the present moment is getting away from the intellectual pharisaism of recent years and becoming adventurous; and it is finding it good to be adventurous.

# I

# THE DYNAMIC OF SCIENCE

## The Aim of Science

The aim of Natural Science is to describe the phenomena of the external world, and in the wide sense to understand it. In its most developed form science presents certain characteristic features: it is a progressively increasing body of knowledge concerning the external world; it deals with judgements for which unanimous assent may be obtained from qualified students of the subject concerned; it demands and accepts as the only test of validity empirical evidence; it makes its first appeal to those who are interested in truth for its own sake rather than to those who see in the applications of scientific knowledge a source of power over material things.

Science is a living body characterised by freedom, continuity and a spirit of adventure. It demands freedom of action and of opinion, freedom to make inquiry and experiment as it wills, and to draw the proper, as opposed to convenient or prejudged, conclusions from the results of those inquiries. It happens at the present time to be allowed this freedom of inquiry only in those fields where the results do not engage our passions; in inanimate nature, for example. There men can be sufficiently detached to seek truth for its own sake.

This freedom is fettered when science seeks to extend itself in such fields of study as biology, economics or sociology—for obvious reasons. In these subjects not only are experiments much harder to carry out than with inanimate bodies, but public opinion would be slow in tolerating changes or restrictions in its thoughts and habits which the results of such experiments might demand.

Science is also continuous. It takes over, and builds up from, all that is best in the past; the advance towards new ideas and knowledge comes from experiments suggested by the old, which may be rejected *in toto* or (more usually) retained with modification. Thus, in Chemistry, the old idea of *phlogiston*, a mysterious fluid that emanated from a metal when burnt in air, was rejected as soon as it was demonstrated on a balance that the metal was lighter, not heavier, than the compound which arose when it was burnt. On the other hand, the atomic theory of the constitution of matter put forward in antiquity and revived in a more scientific form by Dalton about 1804—more than a hundred years before the atom itself was actually isolated—has braved all the criticism of nineteenth-century physics and has been extended without essential modification by work done in this century.

Another characteristic of scientific investigation is, or ideally should be, its impersonality. An individual actually makes the discovery, and in the process of investigation he can exercise his personality to some extent. His brains, his initiative and his other personal qualities lead him to discoveries; but the discoveries themselves do not bear the impress of his personality. They are impersonal. The discoverer is generally one of many co-operators, no one of whom is necessarily

essential to the achievement of the results obtained. Even such a marvellous advance as the theory of Natural Selection was made independently by two such different personalities as Russel Wallace and Darwin. At any rate, scientific knowledge bears the imprint of its discoverer altogether in a smaller degree than does the art of an artist or the philosophy of a philosopher.

## The Reality of Science

The reality of the scientist embraces two broad classes of concepts.[1] First, those things, such as ourselves, the stars, the table and so on, which are ordinarily described as being directly observed by the senses, the reality of which is accepted uncritically by common sense. Secondly, hypothetical entities like atoms, electrons, wireless waves and the ether, which cannot be directly observed. These hypothetical entities are regarded as real, firstly, if an analogy can be found to make them correspond with things which are judged to be real, and, secondly, if they give a satisfactory account of the experimental facts for the explanation of which they have been invoked. Atoms, for example, are regarded as real because they are comparable with such simple objects as small elastic balls of steel or of rubber, electrons because they are comparable with electrically charged balls, wireless waves because they correspond in some respects with the familiar waves of the sea. Anything may be temporarily included in the second class, provided an analogy for it can be found, and provided also that the concept works in practice; it is obvious, therefore, that the second class may become a very wide one.

In the mind of the scientist, as I have said, there is

[1] Cf. N. R. Campbell, *Physics: The Elements*, p. 244.

no doubt about the reality of the first class of concepts, but acceptance of the second class is clearly a matter of faith, and it is wider in the mind of the more trusting and sanguine than in that of the more rational investigator. The latter performs the useful but often unpopular duty of criticising and even pooh-poohing many of the ideas and analogies of the former. One of his functions is to relegate to a third class—the class of the discredited—concepts which too easily had been admitted into the second. As the history of science has shown, however, his usefulness has been more conspicuous in critical than in creative work. The sanguine investigator invents a new concept; the rationalist attempts to destroy it by the argument from incredibility; the former replies that the latter's criticism, even his constructive criticism, could not have existed had not something been put forward to be criticised. He invites the rationalist to explain why the alleged fictions frequently lead to correct results. And indeed it is a matter of history that as experimental facts accumulate and clear the path of obstacles, many entities in the second class of reality approximate more and more in prestige to those of the first; the faith of the more sanguine scientist becomes justified. Wireless waves were originally hypothetical waves in a hypothetical ether; they are still hypothetical waves in a hypothetical ether, but any one at the present time who doubted their reality would be regarded as a crank. In the second half of the nineteenth century the more optimistic and imaginative investigators of physics and chemical science beat the more rationally minded all along the line. It was they who made the big discoveries. A desire for symmetry in writing down differential equations in connection with his electromagnetic theory

of light is said to have led Clerk Maxwell to postulate unknown, and till then unimagined, ether disturbances. Many years later it was shown by the experimentalist, Hertz, how such disturbances could be produced. Later work by Lodge, Marconi and others, revealed the wonderful properties of these waves; and adaptation to practical needs has given to all but the poorest the broadcast service of the present time.

The scientist may be fairly described as an eager, simple-minded and single-minded seeker after truth. He does not profess to be on the road to discover all truth, but only such truth about the external world as is amenable to classification and capable of description in laws and theories which can be tested by the experimental method.

What may be called the ultimate questions of philosophy do not concern the scientist *quâ* scientist. For example, the existence of the external world or the ultimate nature of its reality are not for him vital questions. He would probably say that they do not matter, or that he is too busy with what engages him to give these questions the thought they require. He would allow that there are other subjects of study besides those which occupy the scientist, and other methods of investigation besides the experimental method or its equivalent, but they are for others. For him it is enough that the external world is an obvious field of inquiry for his talents. The study of its phenomena is of sufficient interest, and, as he thinks, importance, to provide him with a useful life-work. The apparent existence of other conscious beings who share with him many of his experiences is regarded as an adequate motive for belief in this external world. They agree with him that unsupported bodies fall to the ground, that summer is hotter than winter, that oxygen

is necessary for life, and so on. Even if the external world is a hallucination, it would not matter to the scientist so long as his fellow-investigators shared the hallucination undistorted with him.

### Hypotheses and Laws

How does the scientist strive to attain knowledge of the external world? He first selects a particular field of study and makes himself acquainted with the main body of existing knowledge, and with the technique developed in it. He may discover gaps in this knowledge, or he may be critical of some of it. Implications are seen which must be put to the crucial test; and his first constructive work is in devising and carrying out experiments to test the points he has in mind. From the results of these experiments, directly or through their implications, he makes inferences; and this he must do very carefully, with almost low cunning in fact, for whereas there is little doubt that Nature answers properly the questions put to her, there is often doubt whether the question as put by the experimenter is what he actually intended. On the results of experiment he frames a hypothesis—if he can—a plausible conjecture as to the explanation of what has occurred, to be retained or rejected on the results of the further experiments which it suggests. If the hypothesis cannot stand subsequent experimental examination, it is modified or rejected; if it can, it is often called a Law. A Law, then, is a generalisation from observed facts possessing greater probability than a hypothesis; it is a hypothesis which has been widely verified. Thus law differs from hypothesis in degree only. Laws like Newton's laws of motion or Einstein's law of gravitation are singularly exact and of almost universal application.

(It is possible they do not apply in the little world-in-itself within the atom.) Others, like Boyle's law (connecting the pressure and the volume of a gas), are less exact, being true only within a narrow range or under qualification. Despite their prestige, laws, like hypotheses, must be modified or even superseded if fresh experimental evidence demands it. This is one of the greatest points of interest in science.

The personality of the propounder or the methods, other than the experimental methods, by which he arrived at his law or hypothesis are of little importance. Laws have been arrived at by conscious reasoning from discovered facts; they have arisen from intuition or been suggested by chance remarks, or even by the mistaken arguments of other workers; at times, oddly enough, they have been put forward out of perversity in opposition to a supposedly well-established law. The important thing is, not who made the discovery or how the hypothesis was called into being, but whether it will stand the test of all the experiments which it suggests, or will explain facts hitherto unexplained. If it cannot, it should be dropped; but if partly or wholly it can, the whole existing body of knowledge must make a place for it, and must, if necessary, allow itself to be modified to the proper extent.

The impact of new facts upon the old knowledge is often of quite an unexpected and even unexpectable kind; and it is this unexpectedness which stimulates workers to go forward by experiment and observation to fuller knowledge and to more satisfactory hypotheses. Facts are the unsettling things. Nature is continually being shown by the experimentalists to be more remarkable than the wildest surmises of the most enthusiastic theorisers. Our imaginations are still so narrow that,

when new knowledge is revealed by the experimental method, we are inclined to be incredulous. The news has to be forced on us. In some cases the newer hypotheses and laws appear so strange that they have not been universally accepted till the older generation, which rejected them, has died out. For example, Faraday never fully accepted the atomic theory of matter, and Kelvin's attitude to much of the best-established work in the early part of this century might be described as 'die-hard'. However prescient the scientist imagines himself to be, every new discovery contains more than its discoverer had guessed. For example, chemical theory, before the discovery of the element selenium, was so far advanced that the properties of this element were confidently predicted. These predictions were exactly verified when the element was discovered; but it was then found that, in addition to these predicted properties, selenium had a new property which could not have been predicted—of conducting the electric current much better in the presence of light than in the dark. This has led to the discovery of other bodies which possess this property in a higher degree, and these are the basis of such inventions as transmit photographs by telegraphy, or make possible the 'phonofilm' in which the speech of the film actor is exactly synchronised with his movements. Selenium is not an isolated instance. All the properties of the element radium (and other radioactive elements) could have been predicted, except their radioactivity—now seen to be the most important property of all. The study of radioactivity, a property of matter unimagined before its discovery, has contributed more than any other study to our present knowledge of atomic structure.

### The Assumptions in Experiment

In the attempt to discover truth by the experimental method there are three main assumptions customarily made: (1) that there is a reign of law, (2) that the working of the whole is deducible from an investigation of the smallest parts which are amenable directly or indirectly to observation, and (3) that the simplest interpretation of experimental facts is not merely the most useful one for the development of knowledge, but, in so far as human beings can arrive at truth, the nearest to the truth. The scientist's justification for adopting these is that he has found them very convenient and useful in practice. If any one can suggest something better, he would say, he would be willing to adopt the suggestion provided that investigation by the experimental method proved it better.

(1) The first of these assumptions requires little discussion. It was made by the earliest scientists and has never been seriously opposed. It is a necessary assumption because, if there is no reign of law, there can be no science. Mysterious happenings of whatever nature are not regarded as being outside the reign of law; they are regarded as interesting phenomena which require investigation. When they do not yield to investigation, it is not concluded that they are irreducible to law; it is merely assumed that the laws which govern them have not been found. As it is theoretically possible that certain phenomena may never be explained as conforming to law of some kind, it is unwise of the scientist to assert that they will. Nevertheless, he will never renounce the attempt to bring everything under law, and, indeed, under the smallest possible number of laws. The scientist does find, however, that certain

types of phenomena are more easily reducible to law than others; and naturally he studies these first. He has a certain right to decline to study phenomena not obviously reducible to law until he has finished studying those that are. Thus the properties of electricity, the expansion of gases, the movements of the heavenly bodies, are more obvious studies than the vagaries of the climate, or the migratory habits of birds; while the two last are obviously questions more suitable for investigation than the connection between red hair and quick temper, or between strangeness of surnames and excellence in poetic achievement.

(2) The macroscopic, or large-scale method of investigation, is that of the child. To a child a ship, a long distance off, seems merely a toy ship on a large scale, a solid piece of wood with mast and funnels stuck into it. The scientist, on the other hand, insists on investigating at the closest possible range—arguing that only by such an investigation is there any hope of finding out what makes the ship go. Nothing is too trifling; everything must be observed. The knowledge so obtained illuminates, although not always obviously, all that can be known on the larger scale; but the converse is not equally true. The appearance of a piece of metal does not suggest to any one the atoms and electrons of which it is said to be composed; but the atoms and electrons tell us all that is important about the metal. The lustre and strength of a metal, its power of conducting heat and electricity, are all known to be due to the presence in it of free electrons. Given the free electrons, the rest follows. On the other hand, a substance like chalk is known to be composed of atoms with bound electrons. It has, therefore, little strength and no metallic lustre; it insulates from heat and is a non-

conductor of electricity. The large-scale method reveals, no doubt, a great number of interesting things, but it is the small-scale method which initiates most of the real discoveries. It is both interesting and useful to know at what time of the year roses bloom best, or the exact percentage of Englishmen who are over six feet in height, or that if iron be coated with paint it will not rust so long as the paint remains intact. Knowledge of this kind may lead to power or control over natural forces, but not to anything like the same degree as does the small-scale method of investigation; it is a mere preliminary to small-scale investigation.

The difference between the values of the small-scale and large-scale points of view in practice may be illustrated by the methods in current use for preventing the rusting of iron. It is obvious that if iron be coated with something like paint or pitch which is not easily weathered, and which at the same time shuts out moisture from the surface of the iron, rusting will be avoided. A method of the same type, but of higher value, is to plate the iron with a metal, like nickel or silver, which is not tarnished in the air. These preventives, although ingenious and useful, may be for many purposes cumbersome, and they are superficial; they do not go to the root of the matter. An intensive study of the structure of the atom has outlined a way of keeping iron from rusting without the external application of other material. It shows that iron and a few other metals may exist in two distinct forms—one the familiar form which is liable to rust, and the other, harder to prepare and less stable, which resembles the noble metals gold and platinum in resisting corrosion or tarnishing. With this possibility before him, the experimenter was spurred on to discover the conditions

necessary for the preparation and preservation of this untarnishable form, and this, aided by a series of happy accidents, he has now accomplished. The practical result is ' stainless ' steel and iron.

(3) The third assumption, that the simplest interpretation of experimental facts is not merely the most useful but probably the truest, seems to bring in the personal predilections of the experimenter. The *facts* obtained by experiment are, or at least should be, independent of the person by whom they were discovered, and of time and place. Work done in England should be capable of exact repetition in Japan and should lead to the same results, provided only that the workers are thoroughly competent. A scientific fact, indeed, would not be regarded as a fact unless unanimous assent were obtained for it from informed students of the branch of science to which it belonged. It is never necessary, indeed it would be impossible, that the fact should be experimentally verified by every one before he accepted it. The possibility of such verification by all, and the actual verification by a trustworthy few, is sufficient for the acceptance of a fact. *Interpretations*, however, may be different, because interpretation is something individual and personal, depending on the qualities of a person's mind. One man tends to choose what seems to him the simplest interpretation, another the first interpretation that occurs to him, a third a highly complex one on the ground that the simple interpretation of anything has never proved to be the right one in the end, and so on. It is clear that, before we are asked to decide between the interpretations put up for choice, they should be rigorously examined by the experimental method. This examination has often a remarkable effect both on the number and on the character of these interpretations.

Ambiguities of interpretation, however, cannot always be dispelled by experiment. In such cases it is considered best to choose the simpler of alternative hypotheses. This, however, is not wholly a matter of taste or of convention; it is really an attempt to get away from what is merely pragmatic and reach something which is objectively true. Anything might be explained, anyhow, if hypotheses were allowed to be invented at will; the fewer the assumptions involved in the theories or hypotheses, the further we get away from 'clever' proofs (like those which seek to show that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays or that Queen Victoria wrote 'In Memoriam'), and the more confident we are that we are not merely making ingenious guesses. A 'simple' theory need not be simple in form. A theory is said to be 'simple' when it is based on the minimum discoverable scientific postulates. Einstein's theory of gravitation is more comprehensive than Newton's in that it explains the advance of the perihelion of Mercury, the deflection of rays of light in the neighbourhood of the sun, and the displacement, towards the red end of the spectrum, of light emitted by the sun; it is also actually simpler than Newton's theory. It is therefore accepted as truer even though it is much harder to understand. Again, whether the earth goes round the sun or the sun round the earth, has not yet been decided by experiment. The Ptolemaic view that the sun went round the earth was adopted because it was the simplest interpretation of what then seemed obvious. The Copernican view, that the earth goes round the sun, supplanted the earlier one, not on any direct experimental evidence, but because the interpretation of the motions of the heavenly bodies was on this view far simpler than on the Ptolemaic. It was thought until recently that the

Copernican view, adopted in the first instance merely out of simplicity, could be shown directly by experiment to be the truer one; but so far the experiments seem to show that no decision can come from experiment. The theory, then, that the earth goes round the sun is one of those theories which is adopted, not because it is more accurate than another in detail, but merely because it is the simplest interpretation of the facts.

There are cases of alternative hypotheses, however, where the ultimate victory of one, either as a result of experiment or on account of simplicity, appears to be impossible. Such cases arise when the subject under investigation is naturally divided between two fields of inquiry which do not overlap, and when theories that adequately explain the phenomena involved in each field by itself are irreconcilable. Thus, at the present moment, there are two theories of radiation. According to one theory, radiation passes from one body to another by a wave-motion; and for most of the phenomena connected with radiation this theory has been tested to the greatest attainable degree of accuracy, and been verified by the prediction of phenomena. The other theory holds that in radiation discrete bundles of energy are emitted in particular directions from a source of energy, and that unlike the energy of a wave this is not gradually dissipated as it gets farther and farther from its source. Within its own sphere this theory is no less accurate and no less capable of predicting phenomena than is the first within its own sphere. Yet the two theories are incompatible. Energy cannot both be projected in a particular direction without being dissipated on its course, and at the same time be propagated equally in all directions with a perfectly gradual loss as it recedes from its

point of origin. Yet each theory within its own sphere is apparently quite clearly right and the other quite wrong. It is probable that here and in similar cases neither alternative is right. A new theory [1] of universal validity must be obtained, a theory of which the present rival theories may turn out to be merely particular cases. It is a matter of history that for the formulation of such hypotheses something like genius is necessary.

### Adventure in Science

At the present day the student of natural science does not allow himself to be deterred from a theory merely because it appears incredible or incompatible with all that has gone before. To such theories indeed he is attracted. The spirit of adventure is strong in him. During the second half of last century the development of natural science was away from adventure and towards a form of intellectual pharisaism. All the great principles appeared to have been discovered and correctly formulated, and the scientist was inclined to believe that all that needed to be done, especially in physics, was to improve the petty details. This point of view changed radically when it was realised that the details were not petty, but capable of leading to astounding conclusions. The old principles still hold, but it is now found that they are not as universal in their application as was once thought. The mistake was not that the principles were asserted to be true when in fact they were false, but that they were assumed to be universal in application, whereas regions have since been discovered where they are inapplicable. Work on the structure of the atom may be quoted in illustration of this. The nucleus of the atom of an

[1] The 'New Wave-Mechanics' of Schrödinger and others, developed in the past year, appears to be a promising start towards this goal.

element was shown experimentally in 1914 to be such that no mathematician with unimpeachable mathematics at that time could allow an atom to exist for even a second. Ten years earlier a mathematician had postulated an atom with this structure and had rejected it, and rightly, on mathematical grounds. But atoms do exist. There is consequently something wrong in his notions of the forces at work inside the atom. But these also were unimpeachable on the assumption that they are exactly similar to forces known to be operative outside an atom. Thus, it is not possible outside an atom for anything to go round and round in a circle without losing energy; it is not likely, therefore, that this should be possible inside an atom. Professor Bohr found, however, that if it were asserted that a thing may go round and round in a track inside an atom for ever without losing energy the difficulty of the atom's instability disappeared. At the time it seemed an absurd idea. But it solved one problem. Next, it was seen that if this assertion were true certain consequences ought to follow. They seemed at the time very odd, but experiment showed that they did occur and exactly in the predicted way. The answer to the older scientist's remark 'Impossible' or 'Incredible' is, 'Maybe, but that is how Nature works'. This courageous break-away from what was best established in the past has led to the most wonderful advances in physics and chemistry in the past fifteen years. We know now that although the great principles of the conservation of energy and of mass are still as true as ever in the spheres in which they were discovered, these principles are not strictly true in others recently discovered—in particular in the interior of the atom and, perhaps, inside certain stars. Inside the atom is a new world where things take place

which would be deemed impossible or miraculous outside the atom.

The man of science, then, is perpetually trying to discover truth in a particular part of reality, the external world; and in a particular way, by the experimental method. He is an adventurer. By seeking, he hopes to find; he knocks, and he believes that eventually all doors will open. In his work he summons imagination to the creation of a hypothesis; but unlike the artist he insists that the construction of his imagination must pass the test of experiment before being accepted as valid. Not even when his imaginative constructions have passed the test does he invest them with the character of finality; he still subjects them to a never-ceasing criticism, in the hope that, through subsequent modifications, they will approach nearer to the ideal of truth. Unceasing and careful observation, patient investigation by experiment, a clear and honest interpretation of results obtained, a readiness to benefit by criticism from whatever source and to admit error the moment it is demonstrated, are all essential to his success. He realises that, if he is ever to be as a king, and rule the forces of nature, he must first sit in the presence of nature, humbly and obediently, like a child.

# II

# BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

BY

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# BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

## SYNOPSIS

### Aim of this Essay

This essay aims at a definition of the antithesis between faith and knowledge; and consequently of the relation between religion and science. The antithesis itself is of great importance, both because it is intensely real and fundamental to all human experience, and because it is so often vaguely and falsely construed.

### Misapprehension of the Nature of Faith

The fundamental error commonly made lies in considering faith as a kind of knowledge. This error appears in various forms. (*a*) Faith may be opposed to reason with reference to the same problems and issue in a *credo quia impossibile* in defiance of logical thought. (*b*) It may be held that faith and reason draw upon different sources of knowledge. Faith is then identified with some form of intuition, and the appeal may be to instinct, to experience or to authority. (*c*) Faith may be grounded upon mystical experience, in which case the appeal in matters of faith is really to primitive modes of thought and feeling.

### Knowledge and Certainty

Faith, however, is not a kind of knowledge, but rather a practical attitude of the will. The view that faith is a faculty of knowledge is derived from an old distinction between 'certain' and 'probable' knowledge, which finds its classical expression in the philosophy of Locke, and which has been modified and developed by the work of Kant and the romanticists of the nineteenth century. Knowledge in the strict sense, it was thought, can only be achieved by logical demonstration, and wherever this is impossible we must fall back on probability or on faith. This view has been exploded by the development of experimental science.

### Scientific Knowledge

Science rests upon the conviction that there is no certain knowledge. All knowledge is more or less well-grounded belief. All beliefs, without exception, must be tested before they can be accepted. The only valid method of testing beliefs is by experiment. Experiment, however, is

only possible on the basis of the belief which it tests and helps to reshape. Science therefore starts, not from facts, but from beliefs. It lives by the experimental testing and remodelling of these beliefs. Science consists precisely in the continuous and deliberate remaking of beliefs which are found to be faulty.

### Science and Faith

Scientific knowledge involves faith. For it insists that the deliberate activity of experiment is essential to the life of knowledge. It suspects *all* beliefs of possible falsity. It is therefore the antithesis of dogmatism. But it uses the beliefs which it doubts as the basis of an activity designed to discover their falsity, and through this discovery to remodel them. It is therefore not agnostic, but thoroughly confident. Its confidence is a faith in the future, in the possibility of a farther and ever farther advance to beliefs which are ever better grounded because more thoroughly tested by experimental activity. This attitude of science is the attitude of faith, which now reveals itself as an attitude of will, as a way of acting in the face of our ignorance.

### The New Testament and Faith

The use of the term 'faith' in the New Testament confirms this analysis. Christ's use of the term makes it impossible to conceive it as a kind of knowledge. He uses it to describe an attitude of mind which produces practical achievement. He frequently sets it in opposition to 'fear'. St. Paul similarly contrasts 'faith' with 'law', and identifies it with 'freedom'. It is practical and creative spontaneity. It meets the problem of evil by action designed to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

### Christianity and Science

Science views the life of knowledge as a practical activity for the removal of ignorance. But this is precisely the Christian attitude to life as a whole, the attitude of faith, within the limited sphere of knowledge. The scientific attitude is therefore characteristically 'Christian'. In the intellectual field, indeed, the terms 'scientific' and 'Christian', properly understood, are synonymous. What lies beyond knowledge is action, and science and Christianity alike ground knowledge upon activity, and in doing so, preach the life of faith. Both insist upon an activity which is rational, because it is governed not by instinct or intuition, not by psychological mechanisms, but by deliberate ideals.

### Religion—Scientific and Christian

A truly Christian religion would be a truly scientific religion. Religion is of course wider than science. It includes art and morality also, and unites the three in the idea of Personality, of which all are functions. The failure of the modern world is a failure to be scientific and Christian

except in the narrow field of science in the strict sense. We need a moral life of faith, an artistic life of faith, and a religious life of faith in addition to the intellectual life of faith which science has created through its unconscious appreciation of the teaching of Christ. The failure to realise spontaneity and creative adventure in the more spiritual aspects of life has meant the destruction of the unity of personality, and the building of a vast machinery of material power without the creation of spiritual resources adequate to its control. This can only be remedied if we spread the spirit of science over the whole of life, and in the unity of personality thus achieved realise a truly Christian religion, as a complete life of adventurous spontaneity and creative experiment.

## II

## BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

THE roots of our life strike deep into mystery, and religion demands that we should live our lives, and order our conduct, with constant reference to a mystery that passes our comprehension. If our purposes are to be determined by clear knowledge, they must perforce be narrow and ignoble purposes. It is the unseen things that are eternal, the incomprehensible things that claim our deepest loyalty. When we lift up our heads to face a human destiny, we find that we are beyond knowledge, and must walk by faith.

This contrast between faith and knowledge is one of the commonplaces of the religious experience. Yet, like so many commonplaces, it is constantly denied or misunderstood. We pretend to ourselves that our faith is another kind of knowledge, a surer and more important knowledge, before which science must bow the knee for judgement. The pride of our dignity, which is one of the fruits of our littleness, will not permit us to remember our limitations. We will have it that we walk by sight when we walk with God, and that we understand the mysteries which govern our experience. Reducing faith to knowledge, we deny the mystery which lies at the heart of religion because it lies at the heart of reality. And since the distinction between science and religion is too glaring to be overlooked, we misinterpret the

distinction, and within the field of our knowledge we contrast those beliefs which are demonstrably true with those beliefs which do not admit of proof, but yet are certain and sure. Faith comes to mean for us that we assert the truth of beliefs which we cannot prove, and thereby we earn (justly, it seems to me) the contempt that attaches to obscurantism.

### Misapprehension of the Nature of Faith

This claim that faith is a kind of knowledge is an error which appears in various ways. It may take the form of asserting that certain dogmas are true in defiance of reason. *Credo quia impossibile.* Reason is thus put out of court. It has no standing in the world of religion. It does not trouble us that we assert our belief in dogmas which our rational thought not merely cannot fathom, but actively disowns. On this showing faith is of its nature anti-rational, and reason is degraded to the status of a menial. In this extreme form we need hardly consider the error. We only fall back upon it as a last resort when driven into a corner. 'Fundamentalism' is not a formidable enemy either of true science or of true religion. The appeal to reason is inevitably made, for it is simply impossible to believe without some ground for one's beliefs, however absurd or unworthy the grounds may be.

More commonly this view of 'faith' takes the form of an appeal to a source of knowledge somehow different from the source to which science refers. Faith knows by instinct or by intuition or by 'experience'—a vague term which serves as a cloak for ignorance and cannot bear examination. This is the modern form of the appeal to 'Nature'. Reason, though it represents the highest development of consciousness, is still a recent

acquirement, still half-fledged and ill-co-ordinated. It stumbles and gropes its way forward, and must often confess its failure and retrace its steps. It lacks finality and conviction. Intuition is an older and more experienced guide, the mother and nurse of reason, sure of herself, direct and immediate in her activity. It is not to be wondered at that in our perplexities over matters of the greatest moment we should fall back upon intuition. Nevertheless to do this is to fail in our human duty. Providence has launched us upon the adventure of living by deliberate and reasoned purposes, and we may not look back. To appeal to intuition is to appeal to what is most primitive in us, to habit and impulse, to what is least human and most akin to our animal origin. It is implicitly to repudiate reason; to assert our right to believe what we should like to believe, since our likes and dislikes are the product of instinct and habit.

If our intuitions were as individual and personal as we are inclined to believe at first sight, the result would be chaos; but the anarchy of the appeal is cloaked by the social nature of our instincts and our habits, which are adapted to the complexity of relations between man and man. To trust our intuition is to trust the traditions of the past, and the institutions in which these have embodied themselves. These alone can give body and reality to the vague impulses that stir in the depths of our being, so that while we imagine that we rest thus upon some deep-seated source of knowledge in ourselves, we are really relying upon the experience and thought of earlier generations, and our appeal is to authority, to an authority which is indeed unquestionable, but merely because it no longer exists save in the heritage which it has bequeathed to us. We do well to remind ourselves

that our habits and our modes of thought, our instincts and our institutions, have a real authority in so far as they represent the crystallised experience of countless generations. Our lives are rooted in the past. Yet our eyes should be fixed upon the future. To set this heritage against reason and to rest upon it, is surely a poor return to make for the human struggle and labour and thought which fashioned it for us. Authority should be our guide and not our master; tradition should be our starting-point and not our resting-place. To appeal to authority is to reject freedom, to turn from our duty to our comfort, to exchange courage for cowardice. It is to play the part of the unfaithful servant who hid his talent in a napkin and buried it in the ground, playing for safety when duty demanded that he should stake all on a risk. Apart from the complex of authority and tradition, reason is blind and empty; but apart from the living breath of individual reason, active and critical, authority and tradition are dead. It is inherent in the principles of Christianity that they should be brought to the bar of free individual judgement. To set authority against reason is to sever the spinal cord of human progress.

In another sense, however, the appeal from reason to intuition in matters of faith need not mean a blind belief in an infallible authority. At its highest it rests upon a mystical view of religious knowledge. The mystical experience is a very real one, and very fundamental. It lies at the roots of artistic activity and of scientific discovery as well as at the roots of religion. Yet for this very reason it cannot be set against rational thought without irreparable loss. Authority, as we have seen, is destroyed by opposing it to reason. Just so mysticism is rendered nugatory if it is accepted as a substitute for

knowledge. To set faith against knowledge is to conceive the mystical intuition as a separate avenue of knowledge in a sphere where reason has no standing. Yet in itself the mystic's experience is not knowledge, but rather a vision of what is there to be known. The vision itself is conditioned in many ways by the social influences, the traditions of thought and activity, the institutions and habits which press continuously upon the mystic's life and mould his consciousness. And if the vision is to issue in knowledge it must find expression and definition in thought and language. Only so is it conceivable, communicable, meaningful. The psychological nature of the mystic vision seems to be much the same in all ages and among all races, but its interpretation is another matter, and varies widely with the culture within which it arises. The vision cannot itself guarantee the truth of the beliefs which are based upon it, any more than the vision of sunrise and sunset can guarantee the truth of a geocentric hypothesis. It can hardly be too often asserted that no intuition can be its own guarantee. Intuitions have been held to establish the truth of the most varied and divergent beliefs, and the craving for mystical experience is only too apt to develop hysteria.

The choice is not between rationalism and mysticism, for these are naturally complementary. It is between a critical and an uncritical, a rational and an instinctive comprehension of the meaning of the vision. The instinctive explanation is not more likely to be correct than the argued judgement, since the former is far more liable to the unaccountable disturbance of subconscious prejudices and tendencies. All our deep-seated experiences tend to find expression as beliefs, that is to say, they inevitably call thought into play to give an account

of themselves, and only by doing so do they gain a meaning for us, and contribute to our knowledge. Surely the interpretation is more likely to be true when the mind that it employs is working at its best, when it is least primitive, most creative, critical and deliberate. The alternative is the creation of 'myths', the employment of a primitive sub-conscious or semi-conscious picture-thinking to express a meaning that we cannot grasp directly. Such imagery may often be a guide and help to reason, but can never be a substitute for it. To ground faith upon intuition and knowledge upon reason, as two distinct sources of truth, is therefore in reality to appeal, in matters of faith, from deliberate and developed to vague and primitive forms of thought. All our beliefs, all our expressions of the meaning of our experience, must submit themselves to the criticism of reason, and to transformation through reason, if they are not to remain, merely and literally, 'the stuff that dreams are made on'. A 'faith' which does not submit itself to reason, which prefers to ground itself upon 'experience', intuition, tradition or mysticism, must be below and not beyond knowledge. Such faith earns justly the charge of obscurantism and superstition.

## Scientific Knowledge

The source of these erroneous views lies in the assumption that faith is a faculty of knowledge, or a substitute for knowledge. Speaking strictly, faith is rather an attitude of the will than an attitude of the reason. Before proceeding to elucidate this central thesis, however, it will be of advantage to indicate the source of the tendency to divide knowledge into two departments, one of which belongs to faith and the other to science. This tendency comes as a legacy from

pre-scientific and pre-critical habits of mind; from a failure to understand the true nature of knowledge. The 'knowledge', which is so contrasted with faith, or 'experience', or intuition, is an ideal certainty reached by logical demonstration. This is what used to be known as Rationalism, an attitude which enshrined itself at its most evident in the writings of the pre-Kantian philosophers. Knowledge, they thought, *must* involve certainty: and certainty in judgement cannot be reached save by logical deduction from a premiss whose certainty is guaranteed by its axiomatic character. Its type is to be found in the operations of pure mathematics, where at any rate conclusions are certain. Over against this lay the 'probable' generalisations of experimental science, based on experience, observation and induction. Such results cannot give certainty, and therefore are not strictly to be called knowledge, as Locke and Hume argued so convincingly. It is this view, on the whole, that we still persist in taking of our religious and moral knowledge: either it is certain or it is sham.[1]

Now it is this result that the development of science has shown to be untenable. Let us put our criticism in the baldest form. Where in thought we get certainty (as in pure mathematics) we do not get knowledge.

[1] This antithesis between 'certainty' and 'probability', of which Locke is the most characteristic exponent, was transformed by the philosophy of Kant into an antithesis between 'knowledge' and 'faith'. Its further development under the influence of the Romantic movement in literature and in the hands of the great German Idealists, Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher and Hegel, is of great importance. What is at bottom the same distinction is now familiar to us all in many disguises. The contrasts between scientific and artistic insight, between understanding and reason, between intellectual apprehension and sympathetic intuition, between knowledge by description and knowledge by acquaintance, between mathematical and historical or evolutionary thought, between thought and feeling, between our understanding of matter and our understanding of life—all these are partial aspects of the fundamental antithesis in its modern development.

Where we get knowledge (as in the empirical sciences) we never get certainty. In a process of real discovery the risk of error can never be eliminated. It can be eliminated from thought only at the expense of intellectual stagnation. Knowledge and certainty, so far from being, as Locke thought, identical, are, on the contrary, irreconcilable. Science was born when the experimental method was discovered and deliberately practised. That method, the method of which the triumphs of modern research and invention are the first-fruits, arises from a healthy scepticism of rational demonstration. It insists that the results of logical deduction must not be accepted as true, but must be tested and re-tested experimentally before they are admitted even as sound working hypotheses. In this change of attitude to the nature of the process of knowing and to the character of its results there are certain implications which are of first-class importance for our subject.

### The Nature of Science

In general the scientific attitude implies that no beliefs, whatever their antiquity or authority, and however passionate may be the conviction attaching to them, can be accepted without criticism. It is a dereliction of duty to assert or imply that a belief is true merely because it is believed, however widely and however strenuously. In its clear and deliberate assertion of this principle lie the origins and the strength of science. Science arises from the criticism of beliefs, often indeed from the criticism and destruction of commonplaces, of truisms, of axioms. It is one of the paradoxes of scientific history that many of its great advances have involved the discovery that what was ' obviously true ' was in fact false, and that the obviousness simply

meant the existence of a strong prejudice which thwarted or perverted critical examination. A demonstration, to be final, must start from a belief which is true *in its own right*. Science recognises no such beliefs.

It follows at once from this that the only criticism which is of any value must be experimental. Mere thinking, however accurate, cannot do more than play one uncertain belief against another, since it must somewhere rest upon unproved assumption. Experiment is more than thought. It involves activity, co-operation between the knower and what he is seeking to know. 'If this thing', says the scientific investigator, 'is what I am inclined to think it is, then if I act upon it in such a fashion it will behave in such a fashion.' Experiment is thus a deliberate activity based upon the expectation of certain definite results, aiming to discover whether these results do or do not happen. If they do not, then the expectation was false, and the belief on which it was based needs revision and modification.

We must notice particularly that no experiment is possible save on the basis of a belief. Only a belief, indeed only an organised system of beliefs, can enable the scientist to have a definite expectation which he may compare with the observed results of his experiments. There is a famous phrase of Kant's in which he speaks of the understanding 'putting questions to Nature'. It is impossible to put a question in the void. *A question must be motived by a doubt, a doubt of the truth of some belief.* One cannot criticise a belief by experiment unless there are already beliefs to be criticised. Our beliefs are originally derived from intuition, modified by the thought and experience and experiments of others and of ourselves. Knowledge, as distinguished from intuition and its elaborations, is simply the unceasing

criticism and reorganisation of our beliefs. Belief, therefore, however it arises, cannot properly be contrasted with knowledge as its opposite. It cannot be another department of knowledge or another kind of knowledge. It is itself the raw material of knowledge.

In terms of these principles we can describe the essential nature of scientific procedure. Science starts not from facts but from beliefs.[1] The belief-basis is originally instinctive, but long before we reach any deliberate search for knowledge it has been elaborated into a system by the natural functioning of the mind and by the pressure of experience. In our own day, for example, the belief from which the scientist starts is the whole body of systematic theory which forms the accepted content of his science. It is this that he criticises by experiment.

Now his experiment compels him to treat this 'belief' as hypothetical only. His business is to test its truth in a particular case. To the scientific mind, therefore, no theory is ever final or absolute. It is always subject to revision, and it cannot be revised by mere thinking. The belief itself is a system of orderly thought, and for that very reason thinking in terms of the belief must

[1] 'Facts', of course, are of crucial importance in scientific procedure. But the contrast between 'fact' and 'theory' is by no means a contrast between two kinds of knowledge. Science is throughout theoretical; but its theories are tested by an appeal to fact. The common notion that the scientist starts work by collecting 'facts' or 'data' is natural, but requires correction in two ways. (1) Not every 'fact' is admissible. Scientific facts are *data deliberately elicited* under determined conditions. (2) Such facts can only be elicited upon a basis of theory, *i.e.* by the criticism of beliefs or hypotheses. It is in this sense that it is important to insist that science does not start with facts. When Galileo, upon an historic occasion, discovered the fact that the velocity of falling bodies is not determined by their mass, by dropping two unequal weights from the top of the leaning tower at Pisa, he was testing, and incidentally disproving, a theory. What gave this experiment its importance was the doctrine that bodies fall to the ground with a velocity proportional to their weight, a doctrine derived from Aristotle and backed by the massed authority, not only of the whole philosophical tradition of the time, but also of the mediaeval church. (See Essay I. above, *passim*.)

fail to revise it. Thought cannot lift itself by its own waistband. A belief can only be revised by acting upon it, and deliberate action is only possible upon the basis of a belief. This is the point which is central to our subject. The scientific attitude and method is an effort to amend beliefs by accepting them as a basis for experiment. We might say, with pardonable exaggeration, that the scientist experiments with his knowledge, not in order to prove it true, but in the hope of proving it faulty. Many of the great advances in the history of scientific thought are the result of experiments which turned out contrary to expectation. The critical moments in the progress of knowledge are usually those at which a logical demonstration is shown by experiment to be faulty, in spite of its logical correctness.

Now it is quite possible, when experimental evidence has shown that a belief is faulty, to shut one's eyes to the evidence, to explain it away, in order to retain the belief comfortably. It is not merely possible, but exceedingly common, especially about fundamental beliefs. Reconstruction is so hard a task, and it is so simple to find reasons for neglecting the evidence. It is equally possible, though perhaps not so common, to accept the experiment and jettison the belief. Both of these attitudes are superstitious, one rationalistic, the other agnostic. Both lead to the same result, the destruction of intellectual life. The scientific attitude —the one which has given us such knowledge of the world as we have—is different. It holds on firmly to both sides of the contradiction, while remaining critical of both. The experiment may be at fault: the belief may be at fault. The only method that is really deliberate is to maintain the belief as the basis for further experiment, and to maintain the results of

experiment so far as they can stand criticism; and to continue to do this until the belief can be so remodelled as to resolve the contradiction. This unending criticism by deliberate experiment of beliefs never reckoned as final *is* the life of knowledge. The nexus of scientific beliefs maintained at any period is only its body; and so far as that body is not growing and functioning in an activity which perpetually modifies it, it is dead, and not really knowledge any more than a corpse is really a man.

### Science and Faith

In this description of knowledge it is possible to recognise the element of faith. Faith makes its appearance the moment a deliberate activity is insisted upon as an essential element in the process of knowledge. I do *not* mean that the scientist substitutes for certainty in his beliefs any sort of instinctive conviction that they are right. That is not faith but superstition. I mean that while recognising that his beliefs are only probable he does not throw up the sponge. He trusts to activity to procure him the means for their modification. He is willing to act upon the basis of beliefs which he knows to be uncertain, but which themselves have been tested up to a point. This is faith, and it is now clear that faith is an attitude of will rather than of reason; a question of what you propose to *do* in face of your ignorance. Speculative reason is grounded in practical reason, as Kant held. Knowledge rests upon the will to know, and has its ultimate origin in a moral demand. This is expressed precisely in the definition of faith given in the Epistle to the Hebrews (I quote from Moffat's translation), 'Faith means we are confident *of what we hope for*: convinced *of what we do not see*'. What the scientist hopes for is not to prove that he is right. He

hopes for greater knowledge. This implies a critical attitude to his own beliefs. It involves also certain demands which he makes of the universe. If he is to experiment he must believe that there is something which he does not know; that this something is a regularity or principle involved in the facts he is observing; and that by taking the right steps, by thought and imagination, by observation and appropriate activity, he can discover it. These demands are postulates of his scientific practice. We might paraphrase another verse of the same chapter, and say, 'Without faith it is impossible to gain knowledge; for he that would know must believe that the world is knowable and that it does discover knowledge to him that seeks it.' Such an attitude does away with dogma, because it recognises that all knowledge is only partial. Equally it does away with scepticism, because it proposes to live and grow by the knowledge which it has, however uncertain. It is an attitude of mind at once thoroughly critical and thoroughly confident.

The mere description of the processes of scientific investigation has already carried us beyond knowledge. Modern science rests upon an attitude of will which meets the impotence of mere thought by a continuous reconstruction through criticism and experiment. This attitude of will, we have argued, is the presupposition of all living knowledge, and we have suggested its identity with faith. In doing this we are claiming that this attitude is what the term 'faith' stands for in religious experience; that this is what the New Testament means by 'faith'. To examine the evidence for this identification would take too long. The experimental test of its propriety is to read the New Testament carefully with this interpretation in view, and to discover

how it illuminates phrases and arguments, and harmonises with the general structure of the outlook on life which is there presented. But some indication of the nature of the evidence may not be out of place.

### The New Testament and Faith

A cursory examination of the Gospels is sufficient to make it clear that Christ's own use of the term 'faith' does not allow us to take it as the equivalent of 'belief' in the ordinary sense of holding certain views. Very frequently the term is used without qualification of any kind to describe a certain practical attitude of mind which is the condition of some unusual achievement. It appears to be a quality of personality which is normally more conspicuous by its absence than by its presence. 'How is it that ye have no faith?' 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say to this mountain, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it shall be done."' Here obviously faith does not mean believing something, nor is it even qualified by a reference to an object believed in or to a person trusted. It is not faith about something, nor faith in some one, but simply faith, some inherent quality, as it were, in the mind; perhaps a general readiness to trust, an absence of hesitation and of the reckoning of consequences, as defined in the injunction, 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow . . . Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'

The meaning of the term grows clearer if we examine certain other terms with which it is commonly connected. In the recorded sayings of Christ faith is characteristically contrasted with fear. 'Why are ye so fearful?' He says to His disciples, 'How is it that ye have no faith?' 'Fear not, only believe.' Faith then is

closely akin to courage, a practical attitude which favours adventure and is willing to take risks. Its opposite is not any kind of ignorance, but carefulness, worry and despair, the fear of danger in a universe which is the Father's house. In St. Paul's Epistles, again, faith appears in an equally characteristic contrast with law. The law is a bondage to rules of conduct, a slavery to imposed duties, a conformity to a standard so high that there is no hope of success, but only 'a certain fearful looking for of judgement'. Faith, on the contrary, is freedom, something inward and spiritual, freedom to co-operate with Christ in the redemption of the world. It involves spontaneity and initiative, creative effort, the realising of ideals rather than conformity to rule. The Christian life is 'fighting the good fight of faith', 'running with patience the race which is set before us', with eyes fixed on the goal, 'forgetting the things that are behind'. It is *not* dependent on knowledge, but on the necessity of our ignorance. 'We walk by faith, *not* by sight', because '*now* we see through a glass, darkly . . . *then* shall we know.'

Two things stand out clearly. Faith is a way of acting, and it does not depend upon knowledge or understanding, whether of reason or of intuition. In a remarkable passage we read that His disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables, and that He replied, 'Lest they should understand'. But the instance which is perhaps the most illuminating of all is that occasion upon which the disciples raised the problem of evil in its acutest form. 'Who did sin,' they asked, 'this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' The answer was, 'Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him'. It might be thought that this was

no answer, yet it is in fact the definition of the Christian attitude to evil, and that attitude is faith. Christ said in effect that the problem of evil is a practical and not a theoretical one. It is to be solved, not by fixing the moral responsibility, but by doing the works of God. Suffering is the opportunity for removing suffering; not a problem to be pored over, but a situation to be remedied. As ignorance is the fact which makes the growth of knowledge possible, so the pain and evil of the world marks it out as the field for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven. 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

### Christianity and Science

This life of free creative activity, which meets the evil of the world by an effort to redeem the world, includes the life of knowledge. Part of the evil of the world is ignorance. That also must be removed by strenuous activity for the creation of knowledge. In the life of faith, knowledge is based upon activity, not activity upon knowledge. 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' asked the Jews. Jesus answered them, 'My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' Faith is thus the principle of life in any body of growing knowledge which appeals to practical activity for its vindication; which 'tries all theories' and 'holds fast that which is good'. It is also the central principle of Christianity. It follows that modern experimental science is characteristically Christian in its own sphere, that it is the intellectual life of faith. Further, any department of life becomes truly Christian in so far as it adopts this attitude, that is to say, in so far

as it treats a belief as a basis for experimental activity with a view to its own development. A Christian morality would be a morality of experiment in which existing moral beliefs were accepted as a necessary but provisional basis for experimental living. A Christian theology would be a theology in which existing dogmas were accepted, not as final, but as a basis for practical religious experiment with a view to their testing and reconstruction. It would be contrasted with Dogmatism on the one hand, with its assertion of authority and finality (whether the authority be of a church or of a set of doctrines or of a mystical experience), and on the other hand with Agnosticism, which rejects any knowledge that is not absolute and final. For what is Agnosticism but that mood of intellectual despair in which, because we have realised the impossibility of finality, we proclaim the impossibility of knowledge. *Ignoramus, ignorabimus.*

What lies beyond knowledge is action. There is of course a type of activity which is merely the expression of the life of the sociological organism, just as there is a type of knowing that is merely a psychological function. All our awareness is played upon by the natural functions of the mind, modified and interpreted, in part consciously, but mainly by mechanisms of which we are completely ignorant, under the influence and stimulus of practical needs and primitive instincts. The psychoanalyst has much to say on this subject, and more to discover. The changes of our interest, the modifications of instinct and habit, all that we call ' learning by experience ' is for the most part of this type. It is a characteristic which we share, in all essentials, with the animal creation. It is not rational and deliberate. It is not controlled by the desire for truth. The type of

action which is its parallel is not governed by a 'hunger and thirst after righteousness', but by the need of adaptation to the environment for the purposes of natural life. 'Faith' transforms these into a knowledge and a practice controlled by ideals; not by any knowledge of what *is*, but by an eager expectation of what ought to be; by the demand for truth and right, by the distant vision of the Kingdom of God on earth. The real activity of personality, which we call will, is deliberate, conscious and experimental. It is the life of faith in its widest meaning. In such a life knowledge does not return upon itself in a vicious circle and live for itself alone. Knowledge for knowledge' sake is a vain and empty thing. Instead, faith treats such shaky knowledge as we possess as a diving-board for a plunge into the future. It becomes free by making knowledge the servant of creation. So it 'removes mountains', and 'laughs at impossibilities'. It makes itself the soul of knowledge, and knowledge its body, its tool, its instrument. 'Thus and thus reality is,' says knowledge; and faith replies, 'Thus and thus your reality is unsatisfactory, and we shall make it otherwise.'

### Religion—Scientific and Christian

Beyond knowledge lies practice. Art unites these, sketching the outlines of new creation; while religion sums them all up as the complete life of unified personality in all its moments. The want of an experimental religion, a truly Christian religion, has meant for the modern world the disintegration of personality. We have sundered knowledge and art and practice, and attempted to make each function in its own vacuum. Only knowledge has flourished, and knowledge only of the material side of life; and it has flourished because

Galileo and Newton and Darwin, within their limits, made it a Christian thing, part of the life of faith. The field within which their genius could work unhampered was and remains limited by our fears, our prejudices and our selfishness, and the limits we set have meant that in developing a vast material power we have evolved no spiritual understanding to control it. Following the lead of the pagans of Greece, we have looked on art as an avenue of escape from reality, and have made a play of it. Accepting its rôle of onlooker, art has tended to become theatrical and dilettante, when it has not become decadent and vicious ; for imagination, like all aspects of consciousness, becomes neurotic through introversion. The divorce of reason and imagination destroys the very basis of creative practice, so that our morality must needs become a matter, not of faith, but of dogma and fixed ideas, which leave conduct at the mercy of the uprushes of dark psychological forces. A morality of laws and ordinances is of necessity a morality of tradition. In a progressive society tradition soon loses touch with the urgent problems of practical life, and the traditional rules become mere conventions, like the rules of a game. It is not surprising, then, that we begin to conceive ' doing what is right ' as ' doing what is expected of us ', or find ourselves talking of ' playing the game ' as if that were the sum-total of duty. We begin to seek escape from the dull routine of work in sentimentality or in sport. Religion, in its turn, fails to be religion, and casts round the theatre of life for a rôle that it may usurp, becoming a sham-knowledge or a sham-art or a sham-ritual, instead of being the unity of the life of faith expressing itself creatively in all possible forms.

Such a criticism of our world is of course over-

emphasised and exaggerated. There is no department of life which does not manifest in some degree the leaven that was hid in it two thousand years ago. A juster estimate tones down the darkness of the picture. It would show how the democratic spirit in politics is grounded on faith ; that its law is experimental, designed to grow by its own revision, resting not on dogma but upon the community of men and upon co-operative effort in the interest of justice. It would note the extraordinary power which has already been wielded by individuals who have yielded themselves whole-heartedly to the Christian spirit in all departments of thought and activity, often completely unconscious that it was to Christ that they offered allegiance. Yet when all is said by way of modification the criticism will remain in principle unaffected. Even the scientist, outside the limits of his laboratory, is still a voice crying in the wilderness. His power to remedy the evils of our material organisation, an enormous power already, is fought and thwarted everywhere by those organised fears we call ' vested interests '. The machinery of democracy, already reasonably adequate to the purposes of freedom, is abused and restrained by an attitude of mind which is out of harmony with the spirit that created it. The light is come into the world, and slowly sweetens and purifies the atmosphere. But the darkness is still dominant, and on the whole we still love darkness rather than light. We have still to be driven by necessity or cajoled by promises along the roads of freedom. Fear, masquerading as the need for security, is still in the main our master. We prefer ' knowledge ' to faith, unless our faith is tricked out for us as a more certain knowledge. Yet in this way neither faith nor knowledge can be ours, since faith is not knowledge, and knowledge

is possible only through faith. Faith is courage in the face of ignorance and insecurity, the refusal to be beaten by failure.

> It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
> To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
> And, baffled, get up and begin again,
> So the chase takes up one's life—that's all.

Such a life of faith lies beyond knowledge, because it is the transcendent spirit of knowledge, the courageous life of creative adventure.

# III

# MORAL ADVENTURE

BY

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# MORAL ADVENTURE

## SYNOPSIS

### Part I

### IN SEARCH OF A MORALITY

#### Slave Morality

The fear of Hell logically entails an ethic of 'safety first'; nevertheless it has never quite prevailed against the call to adventure which sounds in the words and acts of Jesus.

The Renaissance, though in Science and Art a grandly constructive experiment, in Morals was mainly a negative revolt.

Hence the moral revival of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation was largely a conservative reaction. Even Protestant ethics were *in theory* 'world-denying'; and their ultimate sanction was still the supernatural torture chamber.

To-day, Hell is an idea which excites to ridicule more often than to fear. But the traditional picture of Hell ought not to be confused with the essentially different conceptions that right choice has eternal consequences, and that the Reign of Law holds in the sphere of conduct.

Popular morality is largely a survival of a morality based on fear; it requires a new basis in *principle*, clearly understood.

#### Nietzsche and Havelock Ellis

The last half-century resembles the Renaissance in being an epoch of moral revolt; but is unlike it in that leaders of thought are interested in morality.

Summary statement, and critical appreciation, of Mr. Havelock Ellis's conception of the 'Dance of Life'—an attempt to make ethics a branch of aesthetics, with a scientific basis in the study of the Psychology of Sex.

Ethics, being both a science and an art, must criticise accepted views and must, under the right conditions, admit experiment.

Nietzsche's influence has been greater on the Continent than in England or America. His aim was ethical construction, and his summons to a life of heroism has points of contact with the teaching of Christ. But his actual contribution to ethics has been mainly negative; largely because

his central conception, the Will to Power, is empty of positive content — and even neurotic.

### The Ethics of Christ

Christ offers neither law, system nor philosophy; to Him conduct is the art of living. He solves ethical problems, not with a rule, but with a paradox. This attitude is logically consequent on His conception of God.

The rediscovery of the historic Jesus was begun by St. Francis. A possible effect of modern criticism.

One result of the artistic form of Christ's teaching is that its validity is unaffected by lapse of time; it has the eternal appeal which is the prerogative of great art.

There is also a warrior quality about the teaching of Christ. Like Nietzsche, but with a significant difference, He says, 'Live dangerously'.

Content can be given to a summons to adventure only by giving it a direction. The content so given by Christ includes, but in a richer form, both the aesthetic end desiderated by Mr. Havelock Ellis and the 'beyond-man' dream of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche for the modern world represents the Stoic outlook, Havelock Ellis that of Epicurus at its highest level. But Epicureanism has never been able to maintain itself at that level; and the literature of the day reflects the disillusionment which inevitably follows its acceptance. Epicureanism is pessimism in disguise.

But if life is not a dance but a battle, its ills can be borne cheerfully as incidental to a great adventure.

## Part II

## CODE AND EXPERIMENT

### What is Morality?

The existence of society depends on co-operation; this is possible only if its members act in accordance with certain generally accepted rules and understandings laid down by law, custom or etiquette, which collectively may be styled 'the Code'. Co-operation breaks down unless individuals can count on one another to act *as if under contract* to do what is prescribed by the Code.

Morality is the spirit of which the Code is the embodiment. For it motive is fundamental; it is, therefore, ready to go beyond what the letter of the Code demands. It 'plays the game'; and, when possible, it seeks to amend the Code in order to 'improve the game'.

The accepted Code in any society is its *organising principle*. Since the development of civilisation has been largely haphazard, the existing organisation of society is dangerously defective.

This need for reform constitutes a call to moral adventure. But a prior call is to do one's individual duty. At times this involves adventure.

A part of every one's duty is periodically to reconsider what his duty

is. The attempt to do this will usually show that he is neglecting the opportunity for some social service.

### Experiment and Adventure

Social progress is to be achieved, not by the abolition of organisation but by producing a better; this applies especially to an accepted code of ethics.

The analogy between an accepted Code and a scientific hypothesis—both are principles of organisation, the one for acting, the other for knowing.

Three ways in which moral experiment in the true sense must be analogous to scientific experiment.

Moral adventure, while recognising the contractual character of the Code, and therefore the primacy of justice, aims at going beyond justice.

Discussion of the occasions on which a moral experiment involves a breach of the Code.

For adventure to be moral, the maxim 'Live dangerously' must be supplemented and controlled by 'Live constructively'.

## Part III

## THE ETHICS OF SEX

### Difficulty of the Investigation

Reasons why a more detailed discussion of the morality of sex seems advisable. The subject is specially difficult on account of the need of estimating how much allowance is to be made for *unconscious* prejudice in the investigator—whether the result of revolt against the principles of his own early training or of allegiance to them.

A second difficulty, which arises from the wide range of relevant scientific knowledge, assumes manageable dimensions if we recollect that the method of science is to start from an *accepted hypothesis*. We must, therefore, begin by a cross-examination of currently accepted principles of sexual morality.

### Sex and Taboo

In the mind of the ordinary person these may seem to rest on something little better than 'taboo'. But Natural Selection operates among taboos; hence there is a presumption that taboos concerned with so tempestuous a matter as sex, which have been exposed to the turmoil of European thought and practice for twenty-five centuries, rest upon a basis in experience.

In that respect the principle defended by a taboo may be analogous to a scientific hypothesis which has stood the test of verification by experiment long enough to entitle it to be called a Law. In the course of ages this principle has in Europe been simplified down to the single proposition that sexual intercourse outside the monogamous marriage is

morally objectionable. The extreme simplicity of this 'hypothesis' gives it an additional claim to careful consideration.

The New Psychology makes it necessary to reconsider the hypothesis; but not necessarily to discard it. It must be critically examined.

### Marriage and Divorce

The institution of marriage raises ethical questions which are social and economic as well as purely sexual. In particular, unless the community can (as Plato thought desirable) devise some better way of producing and rearing children, it must claim to regulate conditions of marriage—not, however, forgetting that, unless the working of an institution normally benefits the individual, it will not in the long run conduce to the welfare of the race. Considerations bearing on this:

(1) Natural Selection has eliminated races in which the parental instinct is not strong. Since marriage seems the best way of satisfying this instinct, it is likely to conduce to happiness. In spite of the economic burden involved (which educational reform might lessen) a small family is likely to be less happy than one of moderate size.

(2) The fact that society guarantees to the woman that her husband support her and her children, lays on the wife certain (varying) economic obligations, as well as the unvarying obligation of guaranteeing to him that the children are also his.

The ethics of Jealousy. The rule of fidelity in marriage is of social concern, and has roots in a fundamental human instinct which it would be scientifically unsound for any code of ethics to ignore.

The higher freedom of woman depends largely upon the existence of an accepted code 'which excludes her from being a sexual object for men other than her husband'.

(3) For economic and other reasons, marriage must not be at the mercy of every change of feeling. A 'second wind' in marriage.

The highest spiritual possibilities of marriage cannot be realised in a union entered into in the expectation that it will not be lasting.

Normally, then, it would seem that the life-long obligation of marriage is in the interests of the individual. Since, however, in practice this often results in grave hardship, we must consider under what conditions Divorce should be allowed.

It is an error to suppose that any definite ruling on this question is to be found in the words of Christ. Also, since the membership of Church and State is not identical, there is no necessity that the rules which these enforce upon their respective members should be identical.

The problem is to find some way of meeting 'hard cases' without impairing the sense of the security and sanctity of marriage in the general mind. Its solution will probably demand a certain amount of experimentation. A practical suggestion in regard to this.

### The Romantic and the Physical

Prevention is better than cure, and it is of more importance to save people from making unhappy marriages than to facilitate divorce.

Much may be done by dispelling certain false, but widely current, ideas.

(1) Those who expect the impossible are bound to be disappointed. There is a natural psychological propensity to seek, and to imagine one has found, a perfect ideal in some person of the opposite sex. The inevitable disappointment with any actual partner is enhanced beyond measure by the 'romantic tradition' in literature, and to-day especially by the cinema. But romance is not all illusion.

By way of remedy much may be done by promoting relations between the sexes which will make it possible for young men and women to get adequate knowledge of one another's real tastes and character before marriage. What is wanted is to foster relations of comradeship rather than of romance; to secure this should be the main object of the new etiquette which must take the place of that now being discarded.

(2) The Manicheean notion that the instinct of sex is in itself evil must be emphatically repudiated. In particular it must be recognised that a healthy woman, no less than a man, ought to feel its urge. Nevertheless, the psychology of the male and female are not in this respect identical. Frigidity as a cause of unhappiness in marriage,

### Purity and Sublimation

The revolt of the modern woman against sentimentalism. Purity is essentially a mental virtue; it is bodily also because acts of the body inevitably affect the mind. It consists in being primarily interested in the beautiful and the wholesome, not in ignorance of the existence of their opposites or of the way to fight them.

Prudery, and the distinction between 'repression' and self-control. Self-control necessary for sublimation; this is 'not abolishing sexual activity, but lifting it into forms of which our best judgement may approve'.

Brief discussion of the problem of sexual abstinence in cases where marriage is impossible or unduly delayed.

'Free love' does not in fact lead to happiness.

### Prostitution

Sexual irregularity often begins with, and is still oftener excused by, the idea that it constitutes an 'adventure'. This is due to two causes.

(1) Unwise treatment of children when they ask questions touching on sex.

(2) The presentation of sex-morality, not as a comprehensible ideal, but as a set of mere prohibitions. It is characteristic of adolescence to revolt against prohibition, but to glory in ideals.

Some remarks on the prostitute, the 'amateur' and 'trial trips'.

### Ideal and Practice

Mr. Havelock Ellis and others, while in no way desiring to abolish marriage, hold that society should recognise as legitimate other forms of

sexual union. This would in practice necessitate a set of rules and understandings—in fact, a new code.

But what is really wanted is not a new code, but a new vision. This will give their full value both to the physical and to the romantic aspects of sex, but will recognise that, if either of these is allowed permanently to usurp the first place, it will detract from the highest spiritual attainment in marriage itself, and in friendship outside the marriage bond.

Marriage enables the woman to satisfy the urge to creation, by the bearing and bringing up of children. The man must seek this satisfaction elsewhere, normally in his work. In regard to this, the wife may be invaluable as a 'helpmeet', but not as an 'inspiration' in the romantic sense of that word.

A rule which admits exceptions is of little value on account of the hallucinatory power of sex. Cupid is much more than merely blind. A certain amount of renunciation for the sake of principle is necessary for moral development; this fact makes the existence of a rigid rule in regard to sex normally a good thing for the individual.

But renunciation inspired merely by fear of consequences has no moral value. The penalty visited upon sexual offences by public opinion in the Victorian age was too severe. Christ condemned sexual lapses, but showed leniency towards offenders. His disciples were to carry on His work, not by judging men, but by being the 'salt of the earth'.

There are cases so hard that the cost to the individual of renunciation may seem too great to be demanded. Yet the only 'salt' of the earth is the willingness of individuals to make sacrifices which really cost for the sake of principle. An act of voluntary sacrifice may in its moral effects be made spiritually one with the self-offering of Christ.

It is far better to face suffering in this spirit than to be overtaken by it in the disillusionment to which the 'primrose path of dalliance' always leads.

# III

# MORAL ADVENTURE

## Part I

## IN SEARCH OF A MORALITY

### Slave Morality

Darwin, without intending it, undid the work of Constantine. With results that are partly good and partly evil, he made the rejection of doctrines of the Church more fashionable than their acceptance. But for fifteen hundred years Europe was haunted by the flames of Hell and the vision of the *Dies Irae*—the fearful picture of Judgement derived, immediately from Jewish Apocalyptic, ultimately perhaps from Zoroaster. Nevertheless, the gates of Hell could not prevail entirely against the call to adventure which rings out in the words and acts of Christ. The cathedral builders, the knight-errant, St. Francis, soared far above that ethic of ' safety first ' which is the logical corollary of a religion based on fear. Almost, but never quite, has the Church taught a ' slave morality '.

At the Renaissance the reign of terror seemed about to end. Liberated from its prison-house, the spirit of man burst out on a career of experiment. In science and in art that experiment was gloriously fertile and grandly

constructive—for it was conscious of its aims. But so far as morality was concerned, the experiment took the form of a purely negative revolt. The Renaissance was by no means, what it is often described as being, a revival of paganism. Morally the Renaissance was not pagan, it was merely purposeless. The majority of the great writers of Greece and Rome are deeply concerned with moral issues, though of course their moral outlook is very different from that of Christ. If Horace bids us snatch the passing hour mistrustful of the morrow, that is in protest against the high seriousness of a society which seemed to him to need that lesson. Quite other was the typically Renaissance attitude; the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini—which so profound a student of the period as J. A. Symonds selects as the book which quintessentially reflects its spirit—reads like the work of one who, like Adam before he ate the fruit, is simply without knowledge of the difference between good and evil. The pagan poet can mourn *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*; Cellini seems unaware of a distinction between good and bad in the specifically moral sense. On the side of morals, the Renaissance was adventure without insight and without aim—therefore on that side it failed.

That is why the moral revival, which—since man cannot live by bread, or even by art, alone—necessarily followed, was bound to take the form, less of fresh experiment than of conservative reaction. Protestantism, it is true, was an experiment in the moral sphere. By transferring the parade-ground of the soul from the cloister to the hearth, and by seeing the opportunity of serving God less in the sanctuary than in the counting-house and the civic council room, it opened up the possibility of a complete reassessment of the moral values of the Middle Ages. But such a revaluation was

to a very small extent the conscious intention of the Reformers; participation in these activities was justified *theoretically* on account of their value, not in themselves, but as a means of spiritual discipline. In its conscious aims the Protestant Reformation, quite as much as the Jesuit Counter-Reformation within the Latin Church, was a moral reaction, from the 'world-affirming' Renaissance back to the 'world-denying' Middle Age. It was Luther who said 'The world's an ill fellow, let's hope God will soon end him'.

The idea that a Christian ethic might be not 'world-denying' but 'world-transforming' had not yet been clearly formulated; indeed, we sometimes forget that not until this twentieth century has it been at all widespread. And this is not surprising; excessive fear saps the spirit of adventure, and the Churches of the Reformation, no less than the mediaeval and the post-Reformation Latin Church, based the ultimate sanction of conduct on the supernatural torture chamber. Looking back on his Protestant boyhood, Cardinal Manning expresses his thankfulness that at least he had been taught this:

> 'The lake that burneth with fire and brimstone', never even faded in my memory. They were vivid and powerful truths; and motives which forwarded and governed me. I owe to them more than will ever be known till the Last Day.[1]

To-day that cloud has lifted. Scientific discovery, historical criticism and a subtle change—for the better I would suggest—in the mental outlook of the race have made the mediaeval idea of Hell appear to the majority as both ridiculous and immoral.[2] No one, of course,

[1] E. S. Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning*, i. p. 18.

[2] St. Paul, the moral adventurer *par excellence* of the early Church, shared its belief in an impending Judgement—that was an inheritance from Jewish

who has thought seriously about a future life can for a moment suppose that in the next world, if there be such, it is all one whether this life has been basely or nobly lived. One main ground for belief in a life beyond death is that immortality is a postulate of a moral universe; and in a moral universe it cannot be always all the same for the just and for the unjust; the distinction between right and wrong choice would be unreal if its consequences were not in some sense eternal.

Theologians may be found who will maintain that, if this be admitted, we have affirmed all that is essential in the doctrine of Hell. They err. Religion and ethics are concerned with quality; it follows that in any assertion about religion or ethics it is the imaginative element which, since it conditions its emotional content, conditions thereby the amount and kind of truth which it conveys. Therefore the doctrine that right choice is something that has eternal consequences is *not* the same as that of hell-fire; words mean what they are felt to mean, and doctrines are only identical if they evoke an identical reaction in the minds of those who hear them. The doctrine of the eternal significance of right choice is one which, if realised at all, can only inspire to a high seriousness. The traditional doctrine of Hell is one which must either cow or incite to mockery—and neither of these reactions produces a state of mind likely to be morally creative.

I am not saying that in moral training there is no

Apocalyptic. But the goodness of the 'good news' he preached consisted precisely in the contention that a man who had once turned to Christ in faith need no longer *fear* that Judgement. Few, if any, of the passages in the New Testament which are quoted as implying the doctrine of eternal punishment are really intended to convey that meaning. [See the essay, 'The Bible and Hell', by C. W. Emmet in *Immortality*, ed. B. H. Streeter.] There is an extremely suggestive discussion of the attitude of Christ Himself to this cycle of ideas in *The Lord of Thought*, Dougall and Emmet (Student Christian Movement, and Macmillan Co., New York, 1925).

place at all for fear. Where the consequences of actions are likely to be terrible, it is well that men should know the truth. Men do need continually reminding that the Reign of Law—that inevitable nexus of cause and consequence which holds throughout physical nature—holds also in the sphere of conduct. Every word and every action of mine sets in motion a chain of consequences—for good or evil—which extends far beyond my individual ken. Every deed—every thought, even, that is harboured for more than an instant in my mind—effects a subtle change within my personality. The kind of things I do and think make me the kind of man I am. And the kind of man I am determines the friends and enemies I make, the opportunities I see or miss, the things which I succeed or fail in. For better and for worse, 'character is destiny'. No one who has watched the actual working out of the Reign of Law in individual character or in the external consequences of actions in social life—regenerating or devastating as the case may be—can miss the glory or the tragedy which follows the right or wrong in moral choice.[1] And, since the mere fact of dying will not change a bad man to a good, we must suppose that, if personality survives the grave at all, it must survive enriched or injured by the experience of this life. The eternal consequence of moral choice is a truth the preacher does well to inculcate; but Hell is a mythological conception of so gross a character that to preach it to-day is actually to distract attention from the really vital truth to which in a barbaric age it did give crude expression.

[1] Right choice depends quite as much on knowing what one ought to do as on the will to do it. That is why in the Bible 'wisdom' is regarded as an essential of morality. The individual conscience is an unsafe guide unless it has been educated, not only by right living but also by reflection on moral issues. Conscience is not a 'labour-saving' device to exempt us from the trouble of thinking.

The preaching of hell-fire has for some time fallen out of fashion. Ministers of religion for the most part realise, more or less explicitly, that, if not actually immoral, it is at least ineffective. It is less widely recognised that a morality, which for centuries in pulpit exhortation has been based in the last resort on fear, must find some other basis or pass away. For one generation or two, the inertia of custom may keep the majority more or less in the old ways. But in the modern world, for better or worse, mere tradition has lost its old prestige. The morality of a people can no longer rest on what its intellectuals are teaching it to call 'taboos'; it must be founded upon principle—and that clear and comprehensible.

### Nietzsche and Havelock Ellis

The last half-century has been a period in some ways resembling that of the Renaissance—not least in being an epoch of moral revolt. But there are already signs that of a morality based on mere revolt humanity now, as then, will quickly tire. There is, however, this difference between the leaders of thought at the Renaissance and those of the age we live in—the present age is *interested in morals.*

Nietzsche, for example, the literary gonfalonier of revolt, is above all concerned with moral reconstruction. He throws down—but it is in the hope of building up.

> I see something fearful ahead—chaos in the first instance, everything fluid. Nothing that has value in itself, nothing that commands, 'Thou ought'st'. It is a condition of things not to be borne; to the spectacle of this destruction we must oppose creation; to these wandering aims we must oppose one aim—

create it. . . . On this account an aim is now more needed than ever and love, a new love.[1]

The last thing Nietzsche is content to say is, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die'; life to him is futile without purpose clearly realised and without definite ideal. The same holds good of Mr. Havelock Ellis. Like Nietzsche, he takes it for granted that 'God is dead', and seeks on that assumption to build a new ethic from the standpoint of aesthetics.

Life must always be a great adventure, with risks on every hand; a clear-sighted eye, a many-sided sympathy, a fine daring, an endless patience, are ever necessary to all good living. With such qualities alone may the artist in life reach success.[2]

Of these two ventures in ethical reconstruction that of Mr. Havelock Ellis seems to me to be the more valuable, because the more essentially positive. In his philosophy ethics is in effect subsumed under aesthetics, and thus morality is conceived as the Dance of Life. Mr. Ellis claims that his outlook is essentially one with that of the Greeks, which was first consciously revived in modern Europe by the great Lord Shaftesbury in the eighteenth century. The new and distinctive feature, however, of Mr. Ellis's own view is his insistence that an art of life is impossible except on a basis of science. Here again in principle he is right. The aesthetic perfection of the architect's design for a dome will not save it from crashing to destruction if he has insufficient knowledge of his materials and of the strains and stresses which they can support. Just so, the art of living must be based on an exact and thorough know-

[1] I owe this quotation to W. M. Salter, *Nietzsche the Thinker*, p. 203.
[2] Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, p. 263 (Constable, 1923).

ledge of human psychology. Mr. Ellis himself has given life-long study to the psychology of sex; and his ethical conception of the 'Dance of Life' is a structure largely reared on that foundation.

> Dancing and building are the two primary and essential arts. The art of dancing stands at the source of all the arts that express themselves first in the human person. The art of building, or architecture, is the beginning of all the arts that lie outside the person; and in the end they unite. Music, acting, poetry proceed in the one mighty stream; sculpture, painting, all the arts of design, in the other. There is no primary art outside these two arts, for their origin is far earlier than man himself; and dancing came first. . . . Dancing is the primitive expression alike of religion and of love—of religion from the earliest human times we know of, and of love from a period long anterior to the coming of man.[1]

But, I would query, has not Mr. Ellis, in seeking an art to which to liken ethics, chosen the wrong one? Of his two primary arts should he not have selected as the type, not dancing but building? 'The art of building', he says, 'is the beginning of all the arts that lie *outside the person*'; surely ethics is primarily concerned with my relations to a world outside myself. This is so, not only because other persons than myself exist and have rights to be considered, but even in relation to my own self-development. Any psychologist will tell you that mental health depends on a gradual turning outwards of the *libido*; this in the infant is directed inwards, but unless, by easy stages, it is trained in an outward direction, the neurosis called 'Narcissism' results. Again, dancing is for the moment's thrill; building is for lasting use. Ethics is the science of the *structure* of society; in a good ethic, as in good architecture, the

[1] Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, p. 33 f.

structural and the decorative will be intimately blended, and each will subserve the purpose of the other; but of the two it is structure that is fundamental.

Dancing, as Mr. Ellis goes on to show, is of all the arts the one most closely and deeply rooted in sexual emotion. But here again, if the biological function of this emotion be considered, it is found to be the continuance of the race, that is, a kind of building. The 'ecstatic sexual dance of birds', which he speaks of, is merely *preparatory* to the creative task of nest-building and rearing the young. One of the greatest problems of humanity is to see that sexual emotion finds expression in forms which are creative and not disintegrating in the social system. Man's sexual energy is only partially used up in the propagation of the species; civilisation is largely a product —in a sense a by-product—of this residue of energy sublimated in the form of art, whether building or dancing, in the large sense in which Mr. Ellis defines these so as to include all the other arts. Art is not merely a safety-valve for letting off what might be dangerous energy; it is creative of high spiritual value. Nevertheless, Art is the handmaid of Life, not Life of Art.

The traditional subdivision of human idealisms into the pursuit of the Good, the Beautiful and the True, is a more penetrating analysis of human mentality than one which would identify the beautiful and the good; and —since this tripartite analysis is implied in Plato—the Greeks cannot be quoted in the contrary sense merely because the word καλόν means ambiguously either beautiful or good. We, too, can use words like 'fine' or 'fair' of actions as well as looks. The Greeks, like ourselves, were quite aware of the difference between righteousness and beauty; they differed from the average Anglo-Saxon in the relative importance they

attached to these two forms of good. Any attempt to eliminate the moral by making it identical with the aesthetic is unscientific. The distinctions 'good and bad', 'beautiful and ugly', are the expression of two different reactions of the human mind, both of which belong to its original make-up. Indeed, since natural selection has been busy for some hundreds of thousands of years in eliminating all tribes in which herd-loyalty was defective, there is on biological grounds some presumption that the 'moral sense' is more deeply rooted than the aesthetic, for obviously it has more 'survival value'.

Ethics, then, is not merely the Art of living, nor even the Science of living. It is these; but it is also something more. We must affirm this; but all the more for this must we welcome Mr. Ellis's insistence on two points. First, conduct is an art and, therefore, like any other art, is not to be mastered without severe self-training based on a clear appreciation of its aims and its technique. Secondly, it is a science, and must therefore be based on a study, painfully and disinterestedly undertaken, of the actual facts and conditions of human life. To that important section of the field of fact which is comprehended under the title the Psychology of Sex, Mr. Ellis has himself made contributions of great scientific importance. Those who, like myself, think that his theory of ethics is lop-sided—owing to an undue emphasis on sex, and a relative neglect of the facts which the economist, the sociologist or the jurist study—will endeavour to restore the balance, but will not decry either the method or the man.

But if we are to call ethics a science, an important issue is at once raised. Science, it has been shown in the previous essays, is averse to certainties. It is ever

questioning what was said 'to them of old'; it lives by adventure. If, then, morality is to be scientific, must it not do the same? I maintain that it must. It must question the results of the past; and it must make experiments. But if I say this, I must at once add the qualification that moral experiment must be experiment in the sense in which the scientist, not in that in which the pornographic novelist, uses the word.

Nietzsche has influenced opinion in England and America much less than on the Continent. I recall an explanation of this given me in Berlin some twenty years ago by a German friend: 'Nietzsche was required here; in England and America the individual has always had his chance; with us he has been subordinated to the State. It was time that his claims should be asserted—even if extravagantly.' I connect this with an observation made to me some years later by a Prussian theologian, 'The first and last duty impressed by the Church in Germany was Romans xiii. 1: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers . . . the powers that be are ordained of God, therefore he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God"'. The freedom in which Luther was interested was not political; and perhaps, as my friend suggested, Christianity in that tradition had been taught in a way that made necessary the anti-Christianity of Nietzsche—as a stage.

Destruction, however, is at best only a preliminary stage to reconstruction. It is by construction that we live, let alone make progress. Construction was Nietzsche's aim; and for all that he professed himself to be the supreme prophet of 'anti-Christianity', deep down below the surface of his philosophy there is a certain kinship with that of Christ.

By my love and hope I conjure thee, throw not away the hero in thy soul! Keep holy thy highest hope.

If ye had more belief in life ye would yield yourselves less to the moment. But ye have not enough substance in you to wait, not even to idle.[1]

The opposite of the heroic ideal is the ideal of all-round development—and a beautiful opposite and one very desirable, but only an ideal for men good from the bottom up.[2]

To this aspect of Nietzsche I shall have occasion to return later on. For the moment, however, I am only concerned to insist that, with all his greatness, Nietzsche's contribution to ethics in the modern world has been mainly negative; and this, I hold, is due to the fact that the conception of the Will to Power, which he made fundamental to his system of ethical reconstruction, is one full of sound and fury, but actually purely negative. For Power is a conception *empty of content* apart from the purpose which directs its use. Power means capacity to attain an end which is desired. But if my end is merely more power—well, I may as well ask the first turkey-cock I see to exchange souls. The passion for power as such (apart from interest in the ends it is to serve) is a recognised form of neurosis. It is normally an 'over-compensation'—the reverse of the medal so to speak—for an 'inferiority complex'. It is therefore a symptom of weakness, not of strength. There is reason to distrust a philosophy of life which has a neurotic symptom built into its foundations.

## The Ethics of Christ

If asked what precisely is the distinctive feature in the ethics of Christ, I should be inclined to answer,

[1] *Thus spake Zarathustra*, Eng. tr. pp. 55, 58 (Unwin, 1899).

[2] His own example of this kind of good man is Goethe. From a private letter, quoted by W. M. Salter, *op. cit.* p. 512.

'The fact that it is not ethics at all'. Moses has a law; Confucius has a system; the Stoics have a philosophy. Christ, instead of a code, gives an ideal; instead of rules, a life; instead of a philosophy, an art. By this I do not merely mean that the embodiment of His teaching in life and example is that which gives it its power; I mean that in His actual teaching Christ speaks as if He conceived conduct as 'the art of life'—an art of solid building, yet with something of the dancer's gaiety. There is a kind of aesthetic quality about His approach to moral questions; one is always left with the feeling that His teaching is, as it were, 'beyond morality'. The word 'morality' suggests rules, system, law, theoretical principle; but in the teaching of Christ there is always a sense of creation and adventure, a suggestion of buoyancy, paradox, *abandon*. For example, that conflict of duties which arises whenever the claims of family and those of some larger group seem incompatible, is one of the difficult ethical problems which have to be solved differently by each individual in each particular case. But Christ does not suggest a scientific approach to it. He flings down the paradox, 'He that hateth not his father or his mother cannot be my disciple'. In the same spirit He cries, 'Love your enemies', 'Turn the other cheek'.

The gesture of extravagance in sayings like these logically results from an essentially novel conception of God. Christ, if I may venture so to put it, takes God seriously, but not solemnly. To Him God is not the potter, autocrat of the clay He moulds. From a living God there comes forth life, and life means liberty; the creator of personality is the begetter of the free. To Christ, God is not the supernatural law-giver, the grave administrator of the Eternal Justice; He is like the father

of the Prodigal Son, or the shepherd in the tale of the Lost Sheep, for joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance; He is One who sends His rain on the just and on the unjust; therefore men who would become God's children must imitate His generosity.

We can imagine a worldly man listening to Christ as the master of a strange new art worth learning. And it seems so easy; he does not strive or cry over it; he is not a professor. He is himself a man of the world and something more, the man of another world, one who has not even refused the kingdom of this world but has transcended it, turning from jewels to flowers like a child.[1]

To St. Francis of Assisi is due the rediscovery of the historic Jesus—or, rather, its first and most important step. He bade his followers be *joculatores Domini*, the Lord's merry-men, and to make religion more an adventure in the world than a meditation in the cloister. The sense of spiritual adventure thus reawakened soon bore fruit in apparently alien departments of the mental life of man. The next generation saw the rebirth in Europe of Science and Art. Was it an accident that Cimabue and Giotto painted in Assisi, and that Roger Bacon, the inventor of the method of experiment in science, was a Franciscan friar? In our own times historical criticism has, so to speak, brought down the Christ from the stained-glass window into the market-place. It may be that this will be the prelude to another spiritual rediscovery of the historic Jesus, not less fruitful than that of the thirteenth century—but that awaits the translation of the scholar's vision into adventurous thought and act.

[1] A. Clutton-Brock, *Studies in Christianity*, p. 82 (Constable, 1918).

The aesthetic, non-legalistic quality in the ethical teaching of Christ is all-important when the question is raised of the validity of His teaching for other ages than His own. If Christ had legislated, inevitably any legislation that was suitable for life in Palestine in the first century A.D. would have been obsolete in fifty years. Mahomet did legislate; and, for his own people in his own age, he legislated well—and just because his laws were so well adapted to his own time they are obsolete to-day. Again, if Christ had propounded a philosophic theory of ethical principle, as the Stoics did, His teaching would undoubtedly have been one of the milestones in human progress, but would it have been much more? But it is the quality of great art to be eternal. Pheidias and Shakespeare do not go out of date. And just because the life and teaching of Christ have this quality of great art (cf. p. 172) they can be an inspiration for all time.

But if the teaching of Christ, in so far as it has an aesthetic aspect, is on one side in contact with Mr. Havelock Ellis's conception of the Dance of Life, on another side it has an austerity, a warrior quality, which is more akin to Nietzsche. To appreciate the ethics of Christ, we must turn our backs on the sentimental picture of a 'Galilean Idyll' and all that kind of thing. Whatever of romance is to be here found lies in the high adventure which seeks to work out a romantic ideal in the spirit of stark realism; it is the romance that dares to face reality. The core of Christ's teaching is that the gate is strait.

It is, perhaps, worth while to consider side by side Nietzsche's 'Live dangerously', and the word of Christ, 'If any man would be my disciple let him take up his cross and follow me'. This saying of Christ is not, as is commonly supposed, an exhortation to asceti-

cism; it is a summons to adventure. If it was actually spoken by our Lord, its primary reference could not have been to His own crucifixion; a reference to an event which had not yet happened would have conveyed little meaning to the disciples. But in those days crucifixion was the normal method of execution, and the death penalty was awarded lightly and for offences comparatively slight; hence the spectacle of a condemned man carrying the cross along the road to the place of execution was one of everyday occurrence. The equivalent, in modern language, to this famous saying of our Lord would, it has been happily suggested, be something like this: 'If you think to be my disciple, remember it means living with a halter round your neck.' The disciple of Christ is one who has the courage to break new ground; he must dare to differ and dare to die. He has embarked upon an adventure, and needs must 'live dangerously'.

But there is contrast, as well as contact, between Christ and Nietzsche in their view of the dangerous life. Nietzsche's conception of adventure, like his conception of power, is empty of content. 'Ye say a good cause will hallow even war? I say unto you: a good war halloweth every cause.' It is a fine phrase; but a phrase cannot justify a cause—not even aesthetically; a skeleton is the more hideous in an embroidered shroud.

Content is given to a summons to adventure by giving it direction. Mr. Havelock Ellis does this by taking beauty as the goal; the end of the adventure is to make of life a poem or a dance. Christ does this by making its inspiring motive the love of God and Man. Adventure becomes, then, a hunger and thirst after righteousness—social and individual. And this gives it a still richer content; for a noble deed or noble life has aesthetic beauty

—but also something more. Nietzsche in quite another way tries to give aim, and therefore content, to the dangerous life. To him it is the vision of 'beyond-man', the race of supermen whose begetting we may further, that alone gives purpose to this present life.

> God hath died. Now *we* wish beyond-man to live.
> The most careful ask to-day: 'How is man preserved?' But Zarathustra asketh . . . 'How is man *surpassed*?' Beyond-man is my care . . . O my brethren, what I can love in man, is that he is a transition and a destruction.[1]

Nietzsche points man onward and upward—to 'beyond-man'. Christ does the same—to the Kingdom of God. Christ's conception is the richer in content.

Nietzsche and Havelock Ellis stand on opposite sides of the mountain range which divides mankind into the Stoic and the Epicurean breeds. Nietzsche is on the Stoic side; Havelock Ellis stands near the water-shed, but in the last resort he has the mind of Epicurus. On his side of the mountain the descent to the plain is steep; and a long way down the slope the *intelligentzia* of to-day is camping. And daily it drinks from the brook of Disillusionment which has its spring hard by.

It is Epicurus now from whose breath the world grows grey. His gospel, in its noble even more than in its ignoble form, is but a desperate effort to hold at arm's length the conviction, All is vanity. 'All is not vanity'; it says, 'with health and luck, with wise and careful cultivation of the mind and passions, you may achieve a modest happiness punctuated with a supreme moment here and there.' It is a sad and rather dingy creed. Considered as a dance, life is an entertainment which

[1] *Zarathustra*, Eng. tr. p. 428.

does not come off. Other people do the steps all wrong; the band is out of tune; the material conditions which make the dancing-floor are seldom smooth, and our toes get sore.

Think of life, not as a dance, but as a battle, and wounds and weariness are what we should expect. They hurt, but do not dishearten. They may exhaust, but will not embitter. High-brow and low-brow, we can all fall in together. We are off on the great adventure—which some call the service of Man, others the Kingdom of God—to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

But—God hath died? . . . That happened yesterday. Let us await the third day. To-morrow it may be He will rise again.

## Part II

## CODE AND EXPERIMENT

### What is Morality?

Society is a system of persons co-operating with one another, whether at work or at play, in all the complications of political, economic and social life. Co-operation is impossible if you have no idea of what the other man will do. There must exist a set of rules and understandings which prescribe to the individual certain *customary and expected types of behaviour* appropriate to different types of circumstance. The sum total of generally accepted rules and understandings it will be convenient to speak of as 'the Code', using that term to include not only law but the 'unwritten law' prevalent for the time being in any society. The more certainly men can count on one another to observe the Code, the easier does co-operation become. In some cases the type of behaviour is prescribed and enforced by law, in others by an ethical or religious tradition, in yet others by social etiquette. These distinctions are for many purposes important; but they do not affect the fact that in all cases the behaviour is *prescribed*, and that co-operation is made possible by treating the persons concerned *as if they had entered into a contract* to behave in the way prescribed.

The 'sanctity of contract' is in commerce and

finance recognised as the indispensable precondition of all dealings above the level of the operations of the street hawker. In most social relations the contract is more often implied than expressed, but its sanctity is no less the precondition of any kind of social co-operation.

> The small boy who declines to take any further part in a game of cricket after he has had his turn at batting arouses a kind of fury in the breasts of his young companions. He has embarked upon a joint enterprise, he has enjoyed the part of that enterprise which is most interesting to himself, and he has enjoyed that part solely because others have co-operated with him in the expectation that he would co-operate with them in a similar way. To refuse to do so is to disturb the very basis of society and to make cricket impossible.[1]

The motives which prompt obedience to the Code vary with individuals, and with the same individual at different times. It is expected of a hostess that she exhibit a gracious demeanour to a guest, even to one whom she may happen to dislike. She may be moved so to act by the desire to carry into practice the maxim 'Love your enemies', by the hope of an invitation to some select social function, or merely by the habit of conformity to the usage of polite society. Again, it is customary in this country for parents to put their children to school; some do so from enlightened affection, some because their social position demands it, others from fear of the law. But society is enabled to 'carry on' only because, whatever their motive, the majority of people do as a general rule obey the Code.

For Morality motive is fundamental. Morality may be regarded as the spirit of which the Code is the embodiment. But the morality which the Code embodies is that of the average, not of the most advanced,

[1] H. J. Paton, *The Good Will*, p. 285 (Longmans, 1927).

members of society; and even by the average member the Code is recognised as a static, mechanical and inadequate expression of his sense of right. Morality, therefore, tends to interpret the Code not in the letter but in the spirit; it is aware that, since the Sabbath was made for man, it is lawful to do good even at the expense of breaking the letter of the rule. Morality sees in the Code, not an ideal of conduct, but merely that approximation to the ideal which it is practicable for the time being to enforce; it is therefore ready on occasion to give more than is in the bond, 'good measure, running over'. Morality 'plays the game' in the sense of regarding its rules, not as restrictions to be if possible 'got round', but as being, like the canons of an art, the expression of principles designed to make the game from the sporting standpoint—a standpoint half-aesthetic, half-ethical—a 'good' game. But one who is really keen on a game will desire, not only to play it, but to improve it, if by a change of rules this can be done. Morality, therefore, must for ever seek to amend the Code.

Now the particular Code—in the large sense of an accepted customary mode of behaviour, whether prescribed by law, ethical tradition or etiquette—current in any society is *the organising principle* of that society. Society is not a mob; it is not just a collection of individuals who happen at a given moment to be together in the street. It consists of persons whose very existence depends on the fact that there is a certain *stability* in the relations which they have with other persons—of children, for example, who are there because parents provide a home, of parents who provide a home because they have permanent employers, of employers who can employ because they have a trade connection. And

this connection in its turn only exists because of an elaborate organisation of currency, post office, railway, steamship, etc.; which again depends upon there being a stable government at home and a variety of treaties and trade agreements with other similarly organised states, and so on and so forth. Of this infinitely elaborate scheme of relationships—political, social, economic—the organising principle is the established system of institutions, law and social custom.

On the existence of this system depends the possibility of any kind of considered and constructive action. What, for example, would be the use of my writing this essay if I could not depend upon the postman, the letter-sorter, the railway staff, the printer, the publisher, the bookseller, doing their part? And without the co-operation of innumerable other persons, each doing his particular piece of work, it would not be possible for any of these to do his part—much less to be provided with the food, clothing, housing, etc., which is a preliminary condition of any one doing anything at all.

Civilisation, however, has not developed 'according to plan'. The state, the municipality, the factory, the shop, the school, the family, and the elaborate system of law and custom by which each of these is enabled to function, have grown slowly and painfully. There has been an experiment here, an accident there; or perhaps geographical situation, military failure or success, a mechanical invention, the ideas of prophet or reformer have created a need, suggested an opportunity, or provided the stimulus, for some *ad hoc* modification of certain features in an earlier organisation. Inevitably a social machine so developed works in a cumbrous and purblind fashion; it would be remarkable if it did *not* in endless

ways result in inconvenience, injustice, unhappiness and waste—spiritual as well as material. And to-day dislocation and discontent is possible on so grand a scale that the very existence of civilisation is threatened by war and the class-war.

This is a situation which must tax to the uttermost the moral and intellectual qualities of the race. And its difficulty is immensely enhanced by the lack of a clear sense of moral direction, due to the vanishing prestige, with the people in general as well as with intellectuals, of a morality based on religious sanctions in which the majority have ceased to believe. Great civilisations have perished before now; unless ours can find either a new morality or a new intellectual basis for some old morality, it will decline and fall like Babylon and Rome.

Morality, we have seen, seeks to 'play the game'—in the sense of carrying out a recognised obligation in the spirit as well as in the letter—and also, where possible, to 'improve the game'. In morality, therefore, as distinct from law, there is always a germ of the adventurous; it is concerned not merely to preserve, but to create, good. But the first stage in morality is, not to reform the world, but to do one's duty. The world, it is an old saying, would be an immensely better place to live in if only a few more people would do amiably and thoroughly the work they are paid to do. Duty is often boring, usually fatiguing, sometimes exacting to the point of heroism. At that point its quality as adventure becomes obvious to all; 'England expects that every man this day will do his duty' is in our tongue the classical expression of the call to heroic adventure.

But what is my duty? In certain circumstances—to the soldier on parade, for example—the answer is

simple, To do as I am told. Of every one's duty some part consists in the faithful carrying out of instructions given, or regulations laid down, by legitimate authority. But a part of every one's duty is the periodic overhauling of his interests and activities as a whole, with a view to ascertaining what improvement is feasible in regard to the aims towards which they are directed or to the methods of reaching these. The duty of finding out exactly what one's duty is, is of all duties the one most generally neglected. Any one who tries to fulfil it is sure to discover, among other things, that he or she has been neglecting some opportunity of helping to 'improve the game'.

You, my dear sir, have at least a tongue. Have you reflected that the all-powerful force known as Public Opinion is simply 'what everybody is saying', and that for this purpose 'everybody' means a number of people exactly like yourself? Why not then talk—but first think out and be at pains to be informed—about matters of high importance, other than cricket and the Derby? Your conversation will not become less interesting; and perhaps at the next election, municipal or parliamentary, some of your friends will prefer your guidance to that of the *Weekly Wangler*, when they are deciding how to cast their vote.

And you, madam,—so I am informed—also possess a tongue and are not un-practised in the using of it; you have a vote, too, now. And if you will face up to the futility of, and pluck up courage simply to leave undone, two-thirds of what heretofore you have taken it for granted are your 'social duties', you will find the time for some of the many kinds of that unpaid work which, because socially creative, is a *real duty*. Incidentally this will effect a reduction in your dress-bill. Give

half what you so save to *The League of Nations Union*. The League may not be able to prevent another war; but, with proper backing, it has a sporting chance—and you will have 'done your bit'.

## Experiment and Adventure

So complicated is the existing political, social and economic organisation of society, and so inadequate, morally and intellectually, to the tasks which must be faced are the mass of men, that many despair of the possibility of substantial improvement—either in this organisation or in that complex of unwritten law and custom on which it rests. Others believe passionately in the possibility of amelioration, and, what is more to the point, for the sake of such a cause are prepared to make great sacrifices. But amelioration can be brought about, not by the abolition of organisation or codes of conduct, but by the production of an organisation or code better than those which now exist. The introduction of a new system may involve a certain amount of destruction of the old. 'You cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs'; but unless you have a pan ready to put them in, you will merely make a mess on the floor. In the sphere of political organisation and large-scale industrial production it is generally accepted that advance is more likely through adaptation, than through destruction, of the organisation which exists. Quite certainly this holds in regard to that intricate system of individual relationships which depends upon the general acceptance of a traditional code of ethics. In morals, even more than in science, experiment must be made on the basis of a provisional acceptance, combined with free criticism, of an existing hypothesis.

To speak of an accepted Code as an 'hypothesis' is in no way fanciful. In science, hypothesis is a principle of organisation. Science is 'organised knowledge'; and the purpose of a scientific hypothesis is to effect, in some particular field of investigation, an improvement in the existing organisation of knowledge. That is, it is an attempt to achieve an intellectual organisation which is superior to that already existing, either because it covers facts not previously observed or because it explains familiar facts in a way that is simpler, and therefore intellectually more satisfactory (cf. p. 15 f.). The main difference between a scientific hypothesis and a social custom or law is that, while the one is a principle of organisation designed for the purpose of knowing, the other is designed for the purpose of acting.

The analogy between the hypothesis and the Code is one that extends to the conception of experiment as applied to the one field or the other.

(1) In science the experiments by which knowledge is advanced are devised by persons who are masters of the knowledge of the subject which exists already; the experiment of an ignoramus is more likely to blow up the laboratory than to further research. So in the sphere of legislation or ethics a successful experiment is not likely to be made by a person who has been at no pains to master the details of the subject sufficiently to enable him to recognise the value, as well as the inadequacy, of that which the past has achieved. And he will waste much effort, and possibly bring about notable disaster, unless he has learnt the lesson which can be derived from the unsuccessful experiments of previous workers.

(2) In science no serious investigator contrives

experiments to test an hypothesis unless it appears to his mind (and that, be it observed, is the mind of an expert) that the prospect of its turning out to be correct is such as to make worth while the cost, and also (if there be such) the risk, which the experiment involves. Now in the sphere of conduct all experiment is costly; for conduct affects persons, and the consequences of action, upon the character of the doer and upon the welfare of the sufferer, are irrevocable and often disastrous. And whereas a broken test-tube does not matter, a broken life does. This last consideration, however, is one that cuts both ways. When the number of broken lives which an existing system produces is large, provided there is reasonable probability for expecting success, an experiment ought to be made, even if the risk involved is great.

(3) In science an experiment is an act performed in the hope that its result will be to advance truth. In the sphere of law or ethics no act is in any analogous sense an experiment unless it is performed in the hope that it will advance righteousness. An act which contravenes the law or the accepted moral code of the community has no claim whatever to be styled ' a moral experiment ' unless it is done with a clear intention and a reasonable expectation of producing an effect which is morally valuable. A man who offends against a law or usage because he is convinced that it is the cause of serious and widespread evil and an obstacle to human progress, is making a moral experiment. The man who does this either because it suits his personal convenience, or merely because he ' sees no harm in it', is doing the equivalent of playing tricks in the laboratory. He is doing no good himself; but he is wasting time and material, and is creating an atmosphere of insecurity

which hampers the work of those who are trying to make real experiments.

Merely to do our duty, provided we are careful to make sure that it is our real duty, is a moral adventure —sometimes a highly dangerous one. But in a more restricted sense the term 'moral adventure' may be applied to the making of experiments in regard to the institutions, laws and accepted usages of society with a view to their amelioration, or to behaviour towards individual persons which goes beyond what is demanded by the Code. We have seen that any such adventure must start off by recognising the value, and the tacitly contractual character, of the Code which is the principle of organisation in any society. But while recognising this contractual basis, that is to say, the primacy of justice, it always aims at something which is beyond justice. The spirit of moral adventure is a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees—for that was purely contractual. It was based on a contractual view of the relation of man to God, and therefore also of man to his fellow-men.

Since persons are always persons and never merely things, a contractual relation between them is certain to be unsatisfactory if this fact is ignored, and it is supposed that nothing is required but a mechanical equivalence between give and take. The giving and the demanding should be accompanied by that consideration for the self-respect of the other party which is the essence of true courtesy. The relative importance of this element in any social relation is not the same in all cases. An officer in charge of the coolies engaged in coaling a liner ought not to address them as if they were dogs; but neither are they entitled to ask that he shall accost

them like a Sovereign welcoming the ambassador of a friendly Power. 'A shilling, a stick and a smile will take you anywhere,' said Baden-Powell; and the wise man knows that not the least potent of these is the smile. But if, because persons are persons, the fulfilment of the engagements explicit or implicit in every relationship between them involves more than a merely mechanical equilibrium of service and demand, the smile not only is but ought to be as necessary as the shilling and the stick. Consideration and courtesy are not merely the oil of the wheels of personal relationship; they are creative. The bricks of the social edifice are justice and honesty, but generosity and sympathy are the mortar which keeps them in place.

In science the object of experiment is primarily theoretical, that is, it aims at the organisation of knowledge; in morality the object of experiment is practical. It has in view, either the immediate benefit of particular persons, or some general improvement in the organisation of everyday life which will require a change in an institution, a law or a social custom.

When the thing that requires to be changed is embodied in some written law, or in some institution resting on a legal sanction, there are two ways in which the experimenter can proceed. He can either commit an overt breach of the law, or he can endeavour to secure an alteration in it. Which of the two courses is morally the more constructive will depend upon circumstances. For an early Christian, summoned by the magistrate to offer sacrifice in accordance with the law, the adoption of a policy of temporary conformity, pending an agitation for repeal of the law, would have been the declining of moral adventure. A British citizen, sincerely convinced that the incidence of a particular tax is unfair,

would by refusing to pay it be making an immoral experiment—immoral, because the existence for a time of minor injustices is a small evil compared with conduct likely to impair that general respect for law as such without which society would dissolve into anarchy.

When what is needed is the reform of some social custom which has no legal sanction, the first step will still, as a rule, be to endeavour to persuade people that the custom is wrong. But custom differs from law in that it can never be actually changed until some one has the courage to contravene it. The custom, for example, of avenging an insult by a duel was first of all undermined by the gradual spread of the views of people who thought it wrong; but it could never have come to an end in this country unless certain individuals on certain definite occasions had taken the definite step of declining to give or to accept a challenge.

The moral value of an act which contravenes the Code obviously depends entirely on its being an overt act. Secret defiance of a bad law or custom can never be a moral adventure, since it contributes nothing towards its abolition or amendment. Indeed, it is an *immoral* adventure, since its actual effect is to retard improvement. A person who, while secretly defying an existing law or custom, conforms to it in public, is lending it the weight of his apparent approval; he is thus hindering reform to the full extent of any personal influence he may happen to have. Moreover, he is claiming for himself a liberty which in effect he is refusing to others. To describe the conduct of a man who in a prohibitionist state votes 'dry' but privately drinks alcohol, the words 'moral adventure' are inappropriate.

To 'live dangerously' is good; but on one condition —that we realise that life is neither a game nor a skirmish

but a campaign. Not my own pleasure, nor even my own existence, is at stake. On success or failure depend supreme values, affecting not self alone but family, country, humanity. The need of the age is the spirit of adventure, but not the kind of adventure that puts money on a horse or exceeds the speed-limit in a crowded thoroughfare—of that we have already too much. What is wanted is the spirit of *moral* adventure —and this gives meaning and definition to the words, 'Live dangerously', by adding, as a controlling maxim, 'Live constructively'.

# Part III

## THE ETHICS OF SEX

### Difficulty of the Investigation

In regard to politics, economics or education the scope of this essay does not permit of discussion in detail of the practical application of principles. From the point of view, then, of abstract moral theory, there would seem to be no grounds for doing so in the special case of sex. The general principles of moral obligation, and, therefore, the true conception of moral adventure, can hardly be radically different when applied to this particular department of ethics. Nevertheless there are grave reasons for making an exception of the Ethics of Sex—selecting for discussion some only of the more urgent problems.

The manners and morals [writes Mr. H. G. Wells], the laws and arrangements between the sexes to-day, the expectations people have and the rights they claim in love and marriage constitute now a vast, dangerous, unhappy conflict and confusion. It has ceased to follow a code or a system. It is like a panic, like a débâcle. In the past there has been stress, suppression and sorrow in sexual life, but never so chancy, unjust and wasteful a time as this one. It is a state of affairs in which no one is safe for happiness, and no conduct sure of success. . . . The contemporary love-story begins in illusions and goes on by way of misunderstandings to conflict. It opens cheaply and ends in dispute or dull resignation.[1]

[1] H. G. Wells, *The World of William Clissold*, p. 768 f.

The difficulties of the subject are so great that I frankly admit I should willingly have passed it over, had not that been, in effect, to decline an adventure which the title of this essay seemed to impose upon its writer.

First of all there is the difficulty of judging how far the conclusions which *any one* reaches on this particular subject are really determined, less by the process of strictly scientific and philosophical reasoning, than by antecedent prejudice—due to some personal experience or to the atmosphere in which he was brought up. To me, for example, it seems probable that the views of some of the distinguished writers from whose conclusions I differ are not unaffected by a mood of acute reaction against some particular type of tradition in home, school, or church; they are in fact rebels, and 'rebel-psychology' is an imperfect equipment for that cool, objective and realistic consideration of the facts, without which any theory of ethics will be a construction of sentiment rather than of science. But what I recognise in others I must suspect to exist in myself. If they are prejudiced, so probably am I; and, on this subject, so is everybody else. What is called in astronomy 'the personal equation of the observer' is a source of error which necessitates a large, but here unfortunately not exactly measurable, amount of correction of all observations which are concerned with sex. All that any one can do is to endeavour, before reaching his final conclusions, to allow a reasonable margin for such correction in his own case.

A second difficulty arises from the vast range of the considerations—ethical, psychological, sociological and economic—which are not merely relevant but vital to the discussion. So far, however, as it affects the *method* of our enquiry, this difficulty shrinks to much smaller

dimensions if we recall the principle of scientific investigation to which attention has been directed in a previous essay. In science, exploration always takes its start from some accepted hypothesis; it begins by a re-examination of an existing belief (p. 33 f.). Clearly, then, any investigation into the ethics of sex must start off with an examination of the commonly accepted principles of sexual morality. It must study the 'taboos', if you prefer that description, which are actually in possession of the field.

## Sex and Taboo

The word 'taboo' is one not entirely inappropriate to describe the mental attitude towards these principles of the average man or woman. To suppose, however, that for this reason the principles to which the taboo attaches are not worthy of serious examination is to allow oneself to be hoodwinked by a mere word. The question which the biologist or sociologist—and still more the psychologist—will want to ask is, Why have these particular taboos been able to maintain themselves so long?

Taboos do not enjoy the unique privilege of being exempted from the operation of Natural Selection. The sex instinct is so powerful, the institutions and observances connected with it affect so profoundly the organisation, and indeed the very existence, of any society, that among taboos which touch on sex (whatever their origin) the law of 'the survival of the fittest' is certain to come into operation. This process may not eliminate taboos, like the superstition against walking under a ladder, which prohibit the doing of what no one specially desires to do. But a taboo which aspires to ride the storms of sex must have something

more than that behind it. Sex taboos, even though futile or noxious, can flourish in 'protected areas', in a Pacific island or a remote African tribe, where all custom is immemorial and criticism has never waked. But since the dawn of philosophy in Ionia five-and-twenty centuries ago, Europe has been the stew-pot of the world's thought. Greek, Roman and Goth, Jew, Christian and Gnostic, have poured into it their traditions and their questionings; and since the Renaissance the pot has been again aboil. Where the matter concerned is one about which every human being must keenly feel, only a super-taboo could survive. The notion that sexual morality is nothing more than taboo, belongs to the same order of thought as Rousseau's idea that the golden age would dawn again for man when 'the last king had been strangled by the bowels of the last priest'. We have since learnt that kings and priests came into existence because they performed functions necessary to society. Taboos are like kings, in that they can be superseded only by the discovery of some wiser and better way of doing the work they do.

A taboo survives when experience, of the rule of thumb kind, shows that defiance of the restrictions which it imposes works out badly in the long run. It is probable that most taboos have their origin in some experience. Suppose, for example, that in two successive years a man is struck by lightning on a certain hill, it is not unreasonable for the savage to infer that some deity has his seat there and that the place must not be approached, or only after the offering of a special sacrifice. And if some one, after offering such a sacrifice, ascends it and is not killed, the original hypothesis is (by what Mill calls the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference!) so far verified. Where an experiment is

likely to be fatal, and where there is nothing obvious to be gained by it, the savage does not make those further experiments which would decide whether in this particular case the observed sequence of events was a mere coincidence or whether these really stood in the relation of cause and effect. But in Europe, at any rate, no one can deny that, in the last thousand years or so, all taboos connected with sex—whether they had their origin in empiric observation or not—have as a matter of practice, if not of theory, been subjected to plenty of experimentation by innumerable adventurous individuals. Those taboos which have survived have done so because they embody, no doubt in a rough and ready way, the summed experience of the race. The principles to which they are attached are the analogue, in the sphere of practice, of a scientific hypothesis which has so far stood the test of verification by experiment that it is deemed worthy to be styled a law.

There is another respect in which they resemble a scientific hypothesis. They have, in the light of experience and criticism, undergone considerable modification, in the course of which they have tended more and more to the ideal of simplicity which science desiderates. And simplicity is no less a recommendation in a rule which forms the organising principle of a particular sphere of social conduct than in an hypothesis which is (cf. p. 16) the organising principle of a particular field of knowledge. The sexual taboos of Central Africa are numerous and complicated; those of Great Britain have, in effect, been reduced to one—the belief (translated into practice more strictly by women than by men) that sexual intercourse is morally objectionable except in a lifelong monogamous marriage between persons outside

a table of kindred and affinity prescribed (with some minor variations) by the Church or by the State. The extreme simplicity of this 'hypothesis' is alone sufficient to commend it, at least provisionally, to the favourable consideration of a mind trained in scientific method.

But, it will be said, does not the New Psychology compel us to revise all working hypotheses in regard to sex in the light of fresh knowledge? The New Psychology undoubtedly demands that we should reconsider current views; but that does not necessarily mean to revolutionise them. It is easy to forget that, just as men talked prose before they ever heard of grammar, so they thought and acted psychologically before that science was born. Institutions and ideals are objectifications of the psychological needs, as well as of the economic or military necessities, of the race. And if we turn to myths—which the New Psychology has taught us to study scientifically as symbolic reflections of a people's soul—what do we find? The ideal which shines through Andromache's farewell to Hector was not the creation of 'Christian asceticism', nor was India's best-loved legend—the tale of Rama and Sita. What Christianity has done is, in effect, to make a serious attempt to achieve, by discipline in common life, what Greece and India were content to dream of.

I am not suggesting that we are called upon to accept as final, either in theory or in practice, the attitude towards sex which has been characteristic of traditional Christianity. On the contrary, even if this had in practice worked out far better than has been the case, the spirit of science would still demand that any working hypothesis should submit to

re-examination. What does follow, however, from the considerations so far advanced is that the institution of the monogamous marriage, hedged about by an objection to sexual intercourse outside marriage, is clearly indicated as the point from which investigation and, if necessary, experiment should start off. Investigation and experiment, if it is to be truly scientific, must begin by testing an existing belief; and although in regard to sex relations there is more than one existing belief, there is no rival 'hypothesis' which has survived the test of practical experiment under such varying conditions over so large a field.

### Marriage and Divorce

Discussion of the ethics of sex necessarily centres round the institution of marriage. But the ethical problems which arise in connection with it are by no means all of a sexual character. Economic issues are involved, and essential to its purpose are 'the procreation of children' and the 'mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity'. Accordingly, no theory of marriage can be sound which looks upon it as an institution predominantly concerned with sex—whether in its physical aspect or from the standpoint of romantic love.

No community can survive at all which is not so organised as to provide on a large scale conditions which secure the bringing into existence of children, and their subsequent nurture in an environment reasonably favourable to a healthy growth, psychological and moral as well as physical. And unless it gives serious attention to a steady improvement in these conditions, no community is likely to progress. The mechanism by

which heretofore society has secured these conditions has been the institution of marriage—an institution which, in the law and social customs of different races and different epochs, has assumed an extraordinary variety of forms.

Thinkers as far removed from one another in time and temperament as Plato and Karl Marx have, though for different reasons, agreed in holding that the interests of the community would be better served by the abolition of the institution of the family and the substitution of some different type of organisation. No part of the system of either of these philosophers has been so universally repudiated, alike by the sentiment and the common sense of the ordinary man and woman and by the considered judgement of sociologists. Nevertheless, however clear it may be that the abolition of the institution of the family would be socially disintegrating and morally disastrous, I venture to affirm that in their approach to this problem both Plato and Marx were beginning at the right end. For obviously, until and unless a community has evolved an organisation for perpetuating its existence superior to the institution of marriage, it has a right to demand of its members that, if need be, they submit to a considerable sacrifice of individual convenience rather than imperil the stability and normal working of that institution. If the State in time of war may ask the individual to give his life to preserve it from defeat, it may reasonably in time of peace ask for a lesser sacrifice for what in the long run might mean its preservation from extinction.[1]

[1] Clearly, unless the average family in any class or nation *exceeds* two, that stock is dying out. If on the average there are only two children to a marriage, they do not replace their two parents; for of all the children born, many die before marriage, many do not marry, many have no children or only one. Under modern conditions, for one reason or another, the number of persons who have

Accordingly no change in law or social custom can properly be called a 'moral experiment' which is likely to result in a reduction of the quality, or (within certain limits) of the number, of the citizens of the next generation. And it is generally agreed that, from the point of view of the children, a stable union between the parents is in normal cases infinitely the best. This stability, however, becomes a doubtful benefit where marriage has become for husband and wife a standing brawl; and there are obviously limits to the extent to which the rights of children can be pressed as against the happiness of the parents.

The community has no existence apart from the sum total of the individuals comprising it. No institution, therefore, can be really for the good of the community unless in its normal working it conduces to the well-being of the individual as well as to that of the race. If the institution of marriage be looked at from this aspect three points emerge.

(1) Natural Selection has seen to it that only those races have survived in which, for the majority of individuals, the parental instinct is one that is clamant of satisfaction. Marriage has survived because, along

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more than two children is steadily diminishing, especially among the educated classes; unless, then, something is done to encourage members of these classes to have families very greatly in excess of two, these stocks will die out. This is a matter, not of opinion, but of arithmetic.

A strong case can be made out for teaching the wives of drunken husbands in the slums methods of restricting the size of family; to the better educated what now requires to be pointed out is rather the dereliction of duty involved by undue restriction. Over-population may for the moment be an economic difficulty; but the example of France shows the existence of tendencies in modern civilisation which, if not checked in time, must lead to its extinction. Over-population need not lead to war. In this country it is more likely to stimulate the development of new fields of enterprise or discoveries which make habitable lands hitherto all but unoccupied. Under-population, in wealthy countries, far more inevitably leads to war—for it invites attack. The declining birth-rate of France was one cause of the late war; a declining birth-rate was the main cause of the fall of the Roman Empire.

with a reasonable allowance to the claims of sex, it provides the richest possible satisfaction for the parental instinct. This instinct, so far as its *conscious realisation* is concerned, is much less urgent than that of sex; but biologically it is deeply rooted, and it is much less spasmodic in its operation. Indeed, it is probable that for most people, though they are usually unaware of it, the psychological consequence of a life-long thwarting of this instinct (unless it is carefully sublimated)[1] is a much greater degree of unhappiness than results from a (similarly unsublimated) thwarting of the sex instinct. It is the satisfaction of the parental instinct which makes worth while the loss of liberty entailed by marriage—which for the woman is very great, for the man far greater than feminist writers are usually willing to admit.

A large family—more particularly if the intervals between the children are unduly short—may grievously overtax a woman's strength; but it is at least arguable that the extreme modern reaction against this has proved to be the source of almost as much unhappiness, though in a different way. A young and healthy woman who, after a first or even second child, declines maternity is apt later on to be invaded by a subtle discontent—which easily infects the husband also. The man, too, though he often grumbles at a prospective increase of family, usually comes to feel after the event that a full home is one better worth working for; and it is in human nature, within certain limits, to love better what costs one more. At any rate the happiest marriages, so far as my own observation goes, are those where there are from four to six children—spaced out

[1] Of course some professions, such as teaching and nursing, provide, automatically, as it were, a means of sublimating the parental instinct.

over, perhaps, twice that number of years—even when this results in somewhat straitened circumstances.[1]

(2) Society guarantees to the woman that her husband support her and her children. In cases where the man has to work hard and make considerable sacrifices to this end, the reasonable claims he may make upon his wife are proportionately greater. A duke may not request his wife to cook his dinner; a navvy has the right to demand it. But *in all cases* there is implicit in the marriage bargain an obligation on the wife's part that it shall be *his* wife and *his* children that the man is called upon to support. Unless this is guaranteed to him, the marriage can in no sense be a satisfaction to *his* parental instincts; he will be also deprived of the strongest motive for working or saving for those whom he feels to be his 'own flesh and blood'. This is conceded, a little grudgingly, by Mrs. Bertrand Russell.

> But we are forced to the conclusion that a compact to have children may involve very nearly a life-long partnership, though not by any means strict marital fidelity. It does, however, quite clearly mean an honourable limitation of freedom on the woman's side, sufficient to ensure the certainty of descent. A few years of agreed sexual fidelity seems the simplest method. Those whom that irks. . . .[2]

Most people, I should imagine, enter upon marriage in a spirit which makes fidelity to their true love seem,

[1] If this particular type of happiness is to remain a possibility for the educated classes, and if the community is not to be impoverished by the dying out of what are probably its soundest stocks, much more must be done to remove from the parents the economic burden of the higher education. No doubt from the point of view of a general preparation for life, to have plenty of brothers and sisters is in itself an education—but it is incomplete. And what England needs is the development in every town of a school which combines efficient teaching with the *esprit de corps* generated by the boarding-school system.

[2] Dora Russell, *The Right to be Happy*, p. 186 (Routledge, 1927).

not an irksome restriction, but a loyalty in which to glory; and feel the contrary of well pleased with themselves if and when that situation is reversed. But I have quoted this passage as it raises in an acute form a moral issue which nowadays is much debated.

Jealousy is admittedly a 'green-eyed monster'; is it not, then, a sign of moral elevation to have outgrown any objection to one's partner in marriage entering into sexual relations with any third party who happens for the moment to be attractive? Real love, it is argued, seeks the happiness of the other person, and to oppose obstacles to his or her inclinations in such a matter is to reassert a 'possessive' theory of marriage now happily obsolescent.

But to argue in this way is to ignore the vital fact that the unwritten, as well as the written, law concerning marriage is a matter of general concern. If it can be shown that the rule of fidelity in marriage is one that conduces to the welfare of the great majority, no individual is justified in breaking it merely on the ground that his or her partner does not happen to object—or, being a person of 'advanced' views, would be ashamed to express an objection. Publicly to break a rule which is in the general interest, is obviously an anti-social act; to do so privately is to enter upon a course of action necessarily furtive and underhand, and nothing is more demoralising than to find oneself committed to an indefinite series of concealments and evasions.

No doubt it is good to rise superior to jealousy; but it is also good to resist translating into act the stirrings of wandering fancy. At the level of animal instinct the desire for exclusive possession of a sexual partner and the desire to run after a new attraction are exactly on

a par—and both go back to our pre-human ancestors.[1] Civilisation demands the socialising and sublimation of animal instinct; where, as in this case, two instincts come at times into violent conflict, the civilising process is best accomplished by a compromise.

It is harder for the ordinary man or woman to overcome resentment at a partner's infidelity than to forgo errant sex relations. The rule of fidelity in marriage is a compromise between these opposing instincts which it requires no special heroism to make workable. It therefore satisfies the first desideratum of a scientific ethic, that it be based on fundamental needs of human nature and be a socialising of sub-human instincts.

Jealousy, when it discourages a partner in marriage from forming friendships with persons of the opposite sex, is the poison of married life (cf. p. 122). Again, readiness to forgive a partner's faults is a condition of a successful marriage; and in some cases the fault to be forgiven may be a sexual lapse. And unconsciously the sub-human instinct of jealousy predisposes people to judge such a lapse in their partners more harshly than moral failure in other matters equally important. But, quite apart from the feelings of the other partner, if infidelity in marriage is a breach of a socially valuable rule, it is to be condemned. And for either husband or wife to encourage the other in adultery for the sake of exercising a magnanimous superiority to jealousy, is like teaching the housemaid to steal in order to wean oneself from covetousness.

To the political philosopher it is an accepted truism that liberty is impossible except on the basis of general

[1] The notion that the objection has its origin in the patriarchal family, and the desire of the male to treat the female as property, is absurd. Some people write as if a jealous woman were an unheard-of phenomenon. Or perhaps when that occurs we must drag in as an explanation the still earlier matriarchal family!

respect for law. There is an additional reason, psychological in character, why this principle should apply to marriage. The higher freedom of women—a freedom I mean which ensures that they are thought of and treated by men, not as a specialised (and, therefore, as a limited and inferior) sex, but as human persons—is only possible in a society where certain restrictions are taken for granted. The psychological reason for this is bluntly stated in an article in the current number (July 1927) of *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*.

> . . . The inhibitions against the more extreme manifestations of sexuality are felt to be so efficient, that inhibitions affecting the more superficial relationships involved in social intercourse can be appreciably relaxed, with a resulting marked increase in social freedom. Thus it comes about that many a woman finds —somewhat to her astonishment—that not the least of the benefits of marriage consists in an easier and less impeded social relationship with other men. Being excluded as a sexual object for men other than her husband, she can be more readily looked upon as a fellow-member of society, the twin anti-social effects of sexual desire and sexual inhibitions no longer making themselves felt to the same extent as formerly.

(3) When two parties contract a marriage, steps are taken which cannot be retraced the moment there is a change of feeling on the part of either of them. If a man buys and furnishes a house for his bride, the contracts of sale are not revoked by the fact that six months later she falls in love with some one else. Again, a woman who consents to marry A has forgone the chance of marrying B ; that chance does not necessarily recur if a year or two later her husband begins to find her conversation boring.

The mystics say that a period of flatness and staleness, ' the dark night of the soul ', regularly follows the supreme experience of exaltation and illumination ;

this may sometimes last for years, but those who persevere to the end attain ultimately to a peace and happiness that endures and passeth understanding. It is often so with marriage. Enthusiasm and exaltation—at all levels of human experience—are inevitably followed by reaction. Love must be born again, and in a new shape, before marriage can realise its ideal. But many would never struggle through the time of blankness, if law and public opinion did not oblige them to go on. In marriage, as on the running track, the fixity of the course makes easier the effort to find one's 'second wind'.

A marriage entered upon as a lifelong bond, 'for better for worse . . . till death us do part', cannot but—in its reaction on character, hopes and ideals—be something different in kind from a union of a temporary kind. The realisation of the highest ranges of spiritual and moral attainment in marriage would not for most people be possible if it were entered upon in the expectation of impermanence. A certain atmosphere of finality is the true spirit of marriage.

> Then trust me not at all, or all in all.

Marriage loses something of its essential quality unless its breakdown is regarded as something which, like the amputation of a limb, is an irreparable disaster even if necessary to save life. It cannot make terms with the gentleman who was looking out for a State 'where marriage certificates are issued with a divorce-coupon attached'.

Normally, then, the interests both of society and of the individuals concerned are best subserved by making the marriage bond one of lifelong obligation. In the exceptional case, however, this obligation inflicts

the gravest hardship—resulting at times, not only in unhappiness, but in spiritual degeneration. And at the present day—partly owing to causes which, as I shall show later, are largely remediable—the number of such cases is very large. That being so, we are led on to consider under what conditions society ought to permit divorce.

The idea that a definite ruling on this question is to be found in the words of Christ rests, I believe, on a misapprehension of His method and His meaning.[1] In regard to no other question does He make rules; He states ideals—usually in the form of paradox or parable which could not conceivably be treated as legislative enactments (p. 66). Most emphatically Christ taught that monogamy is the ideal, and that a divorce is a moral calamity. Moses, He said, had sanctioned divorce on account of the hardness of men's hearts. But I see no reason for believing that He held that Moses *did wrong* in thus taking into account the facts of human nature. Moses was a legislator; and every legislator is bound to consider, not only what is ideal, but also the very different question what things it is wise or practicable to attempt to *enforce by law*—and in the days of Moses the indissolubility of marriage was not one of these. There has been moral progress since Moses; nevertheless, the modern legislator is confronted with the fact that in this particular respect the hearts of men (and women) have not left off being hard.

[1] As reported by Mark and Luke, our Lord's condemnation of divorce is absolute; Matthew records identical sayings, but with a qualifying exception in the case of fornication. The insertion of the qualification in Matthew may be explained by the desire to turn a proclamation of an ideal into an enforceable rule; its omission (if original) by Mark and Luke is less easy to account for. To take this view in no way involves the rejection of Archdeacon Charles's contention (cf. *The Teaching of the New Testament on Divorce*, pp. 85 ff.) that the story in Matt. xix. 3-12 is dependent on a source which on the whole is superior to Mark x. 2-12.

Another mistake is to suppose that the law of the Church and of the State in the matter of divorce must be identical. It is ideally desirable that this be so, but it is not necessary. The preservation in the popular mind of the prestige of the monogamous marriage is a vital interest of the State; in that respect the marriage legislation of Church and State have an identical aim. It does not follow that these two bodies will agree as to the best method of attaining it. They are not legislating for exactly the same set of persons; and it is possible, though not, I think, very probable, that in this case the two sets of persons may require different sets of rules. The Church (in its legislative capacity in regard to its own members) is bound to consider—and from time to time should reconsider—how far it is wise to try and enforce particular rules; but it must claim the right to be its own Moses. In this matter neither Church nor State should attempt to dictate to the other.

The state of things at the present moment is such that much adventurous thinking, and probably some practical experiment, will be needed before the right remedy is discovered. But we have always to remember that no such experiment will be in its total effect moral, unless it can somehow find a way to meet cases of exceptional hardship without any weakening of the hold on the popular mind of the principle that marriage is essentially and ideally a lifelong union. If exceptions to this principle are too lightly admitted, it will be hard for the average man and woman to retain that sense of security and sanctity in marriage which is a condition of their deriving from it the maximum of moral and spiritual benefit.

It is worth while, however, to insist that the problem here set to the reformer is one in no way peculiar to the

institution of marriage; it arises in regard to every human law or institution. Society can only be held together by laws based on some general principle and designed to meet some general need; but there is no law, however salutary, which does not entail hardship in exceptional cases. When, however, such hardship is found to exist on a large scale, the wise legislator sets about to find out what modification of the law (if any) would alleviate the most conspicuous or most common cases of hardship. And he does this *for the sake of the objects which the law or institution itself is designed to secure*; for, though it is true that 'hard cases make bad law', nevertheless, whenever the hard cases are sufficiently numerous or sufficiently hard, public opinion condemns the law. The institution or law itself then loses its prestige; for law maintains its prestige only when what it enforces seems to the common mind both reasonable and right.

It is too much to expect that the right solution of so difficult a problem will be reached without a certain amount of experimentation. But an experiment is worthless unless there is some one to watch it; and if the watcher is merely the general public, some facts of vital importance are bound to escape notice. The practical suggestions, therefore, that I venture to put forward are two:

(1) Any new legislation touching marriage and divorce should be avowedly of a temporary character, expiring automatically after, say, ten years—saving, of course, all interests created under it.

(2) When such legislation is passed the enacting law should provide for the immediate appointment of commissioners with the duty of watching the experiment. Further, it should be made an obligation on all persons

who avail themselves of the new law to report themselves from time to time to the commissioners and to answer questions. The inconvenience entailed by such obligation would be a small matter compared with the benefits they would hope to derive from the law. At the end of the ten years the commissioners would be in a position to advise the Government of the day as to the advisability (or otherwise) of re-enacting the law, of doing so with considered amendments, or of prolonging the period of experiment. All future legislation on this matter of vital national importance would thus be so far as possible removed from the influence of uninformed prejudice or of temporary agitations and would be based on a strictly scientific study of fact. The method, I may add, is one that might profitably be tried in other specially difficult fields of social reform.

### The Romantic and the Physical

Sociologists are in the habit of insisting that in matters like unemployment and public health the most hopeful line of advance is to concentrate on experiments of which the aim is *prevention rather than cure*. It is my own belief that this holds good of marriage. Legislation, provided it is sufficiently wise, may do something to meet the case of persons who at this present moment are unhappily married. But it is far more important to consider whether it may not be possible to take steps towards the removal of the causes which most frequently lead to marriages becoming unhappy. To illustrate my meaning I will briefly say something about two of the most common.

(1) In every one of us there lives a mental image of, and a deep longing to find, the ideal person of the opposite sex. On the origin of this *imago* modern

psychology has thrown much light. But as the number of ideal persons in existence is unfortunately not enough to go round, there is a psychological tendency to 'project' upon any person who conforms to our ideal in certain ways — often purely fortuitous, such as tone of voice, colour of hair, or accident of gesture — all the totality of excellences by which our dream hero or heroine is distinguished. If we marry the individual upon whom this ideal has been projected, we are liable, through no fault of that person, to be grievously disappointed. A husband once said to me of his wife, 'If only she would always be her true self, we should be so happy together'. It was obvious to any outsider that the lady in question was all the time being her true self—and that, on the whole, a very admirable and amiable self. Those qualities which in her husband's eyes she was continually and perversely refusing to display, were qualities she had never possessed except in his imagination.

At the present day this inevitable psychological propensity is liable to excessive stimulation by the machinery which modern civilisation has devised for intensifying interest in the romantic aspect of sex—the novelette, the theatre, the cinema—an interest, of course, which is itself largely the creation of the psychological phenomenon already mentioned. I cannot forbear quoting a few sentences from the notable discussion of romanticism by Mr. H. G. Wells[1]—adding by way of comment on it, that much of what he says about women would apply also, with but little alteration, to men.

> An increasing multitude of girls . . . is growing up to womanhood with no idea of any sort of worth-while career except that of the heroine of a love-story with a powerful,

[1] H. G. Wells, *op. cit.* pp. 774-787.

patient, constantly excited and always devoted man. . . . The young man who sits beside the thrilling girl in the cinema theatre is already, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, a subordinated young man; he is always going to be rather preoccupied with the interest and difficulties of the work he has to do, and he is never going far away to execute wonderful deeds. Still less is he ever coming back with his hands full of gifts and his eyes full of crystalline desire. He is doomed, therefore, to be treated as a second-best thing by a young woman who would, if she were put to the equivalent test as a heroine, fail to prove herself even second-rate. He is going to be judged by false standards and treated upon false assumptions. . . . Humiliation awaits him, and for her wait the sorry reactions of a humiliated man. . . .

She must realise that though she can be violently attractive to a man she is only spasmodically attractive, and that on the whole her need for him is greater than his need for her. . . . It is the fundamental falsity of the romantic tradition that man should subordinate himself to the egotism of a woman. Let her not dream of it. It lures her on to the development of an enhanced exaggerated ego, pitifully painted, scented and adorned for worship. In that she sinks her actual personality.

Yet romance is not all illusion. The instinct to idealise the beloved is like other natural instincts in that, if guided by reason and reflection, it becomes creative. We see the good in those we love; but the fact that we are there to see it is often what brings it into being. Often a man's wife not only seems, but actually *is*, better to him than to the rest of the world. And when good is there, even if it has been elicited by our own faith in it, it inspires us too to see it and to worship it—for the vision of goodness is the revelation of the divine.

The best prophylactic against false romanticism is a set of social conventions which make it as easy as possible for men and women to find out *before marriage* whether they are really suited. Until recently the

conditions, more especially in the better-educated sections of the community, under which young people of different sexes were enabled to make one another's acquaintance, were so restricted, and often, as in the ball-room, of such an artificial character, that it was rarely possible to gain the knowledge of each other's character and tastes so essential to a sound judgement as to the probable success of a lifelong partnership. Indeed, twenty years ago most marriages were entered into by persons who had only met under circumstances likely to produce an actually misleading impression of their real selves.

Recent changes in social custom and convention have done much to remedy this. The increase in opportunities for real and rational comradeship between persons of opposite sex is a thing so desirable that it is worth while to make experiments for its sake even if accompanied by considerable risk. But in this, as in other departments of life, the mere removal of unnecessary or unreasonable restrictions, though a preliminary condition of advance, will not in itself secure it. It may indeed have the opposite effect, unless old conventions are replaced by new. It is no more possible to do without some definite recognised 'code' in the relation of the sexes than it is in the relation between guest and host. There must, among other things, be a clear understanding as to limits of intimacy which persons of good breeding are expected as a matter of course to observe. What these should be I do not venture to lay down. The unwritten laws which are to prevail in these matters should, and I think will, be gradually evolved by the general assent of persons under thirty years of age. But I would commend to the consideration of those who set the fashion for the younger generation two principles:

First, the line of advance is the promotion of comradeship and co-operation between the sexes; hence the securing of conditions favourable to relationships of this kind should be the primary aim of the new conventions. Nature will see to it that the other side of sexual relationship is not unduly thrust into the background. Secondly, it is mainly in the interests of the weak that rules are necessary. Hence in this—more perhaps than in any other department of life—it is the duty of the stronger brother and sister to assist the weaker by themselves submitting to restrictions which they see the weaker could not do without. Where the acceptance of a particular restriction is recognised as socially constructive, it becomes, not a weak abnegation of personal liberty, but a creative moral act.

(2) No constructive discussion of the ethics of sex is possible which does not start off by unreservedly repudiating the notion that there is something inherently evil in the sexual instinct itself. To begin with, it is essentially un-Christian. That is to say, it is wholly foreign to the traditional Jewish attitude expressed in the Old Testament and implied in the teaching of Christ. The idea that matter—and, therefore, the body and all connected with it—is evil, is one that began shortly before the Christian era to invade the Roman Empire from the East. Even in the New Testament it is possible to find a text or two in which its influence may be suspected. In its extreme expressions, by the Gnostic and the Manichee, the Church fought hard against this tendency; nevertheless, the belief that the instinct of sex is somehow in itself evil percolated into Catholic Christianity. The Reformation was a step towards the repudiation of this idea; and it is much to the credit of the Jesuits that they endeavoured to

temper some of its worst manifestations within the Latin Church.

The time has come for a repudiation more complete and more emphatic. The body and its instincts are in themselves good—though capable of infinite perversion in the direction of evil. Men and women should be no more ashamed of the instinct of sex than of the instinct of hunger. The education and control of both instincts requires to be taken seriously; the misuse of either brings disease and degradation. Yet the right use of hunger leads to physical health; and the right use of sex is a main condition of the highest moral and spiritual development. But there is an important difference between them. Hunger must find daily satisfaction, and that at the purely physical level. The sex instinct must to a certain extent, and may to almost any extent, express itself through 'sublimation'—that is, through the diversion of energy into creative work, or towards that aspiration after the ideal which finds its satisfaction in Art and in Religion. For persons in the flower of life to be either incapable of sexual feeling, or incapable of controlling it, is equally a sign that they are physically, or (more often) psychologically, unhealthy. The woman who prides herself on complete absence of sex feeling is not a saint, but an invalid; and no less an invalid is the man who mistakes uncontrolled impulse for exceptional virility.[1]

[1] I have come across cases—and believe them to be common—where resort to a prostitute has been a *substitute* for solitary sex-indulgence, when, as often happens, this had become a 'compulsive habit' virtually beyond the voluntary control of the will. Such a habit is now recognised as neurotic in origin; and it can usually be cured by psycho-therapeutic methods. In any case it is less objectionable on moral grounds than the practice of satisfying a personal craving at the cost of that degradation of a fellow-creature which is what prostitution involves.

If women [writes Mrs. Bertrand Russell] really desire an individual life, freedom and a part in the cultural development of the race, they must not only fight for the right to do any man's work of which they are mentally and physically capable, they must also be more honest and frank about their instinctive nature and its functions. . . . Why all this feminine delicacy? . . . In sex life I believe that women who were free and honest would find that they did not differ very greatly from men.[1]

Mr. Havelock Ellis would, I imagine, wish to amend the last sentence of the above quotation. Women, he would say, do differ from men, but the difference lies in the fact that a kind of miniature courtship by the male is normally a psychological condition antecedent to the complete arousal of desire. For this reason he believes that for the wife's sake, even more than for his own, a recognition by the husband of 'the play-function of sex' is important.

Nothing is so full of play as love.

It is true that women whose instincts are not perverted at the roots do not desire to be cold. Far from it. But to dispel that coldness the right atmosphere is needed, and the insight and skill of the right man. In the erotic sphere a woman asks nothing better of a man than to be lifted above her coldness, to the higher plane where there is reciprocal interest and mutual joy in the act of love. Therein her silent demand is one with Nature's.[2]

The theory that woman *ought not* consciously to feel the impulsions of the sex instinct—impressed upon the individual from the earliest years, enshrined in romantic literature and embodied in conventions of social usage—is potent to induce in many women an actual 'frigidity' which translates the theory into fact. And on this rock not a few marriages go shipwreck.

[1] Dora Russell, *op. cit.* pp. 163, 165.
[2] *Little Essays of Love and Virtue*, pp. 132, 112 (Black, 1922).

Enormous numbers of middle-class and working women apparently still despise their husbands as people of an inferior animal nature, whose desires a woman may condone in loving-kindness but can never share.[1]

It is not good for a man to be treated by his wife, with however kindly intent, as an inferior animal—and the better the wife, the worse the result. It is sound psychology—as well as good Christianity—that, if you wish to improve people, you must treat them as if they were better than they are. It is in human nature to act in the way that is expected of one. Hence, to treat any one as worse than he is, is the way to make him worse. There is a further consideration. In the male, the sense of self-respect is, for biological and psychological reasons, closely associated with the idea of sexual virility. If, then, a man finds that, just because he is a *man*, he is regarded as an animal, his instinctive reaction is to feel, 'Well, if she thinks I'm an animal, I'll show her I can be a real brute'. Affection for his wife, and the restraints of civilisation, may prevent the expression of such a thought in word or deed. But it is not good for a man to be made even to think like that very often. It is less surprising than might at first sight appear that the husbands of 'holy' women sometimes take to drink.[2]

## Purity and Sublimation

Purity is a virtue of which the appeal is largely aesthetic. That is one reason why women more fre-

[1] Dora Russell, *op. cit.* p. 161.

[2] A medical friend, after reading the above in proof, made this comment: 'For the man to regard the woman, or for the woman to regard herself, as a merely passive instrument of his desire, is a radically false conception. Frigidity in the female is either something artificially induced or a natural defect—in either case disastrous to the happiness of both. I think this side needs fuller insistence than you give it.'

quently than men have prided themselves on its possession. It is perhaps the reason why many men, who set very little store by it in the male, are yet ready to worship it in the female—often in a highly sentimental way. Besides this, there is the instinctive feeling, which biologically is probably well grounded, that, woman being potentially a mother, it misbeseems her to treat the source of life with levity.

The typical young woman of to-day is in a state of acute revolt against anything like sentimentalism in this matter. She does not want to be 'an angel-watered lily'. I am glad of that. Nor do I think the Lady to whom the poet first applied these words would have been well pleased by such a description of herself.

Purity in any rational sense of the word is primarily a virtue of the mind—of the body also, because any act of the body, more especially in this regard, reacts upon the mind. But no mental virtue can be based on ignorance. The essence of clean-mindedness—and this is as much a virtue in the male as in the female—is to be primarily interested in what is beautiful and wholesome. But a person who has no knowledge of the ugly and unwholesome is ill-equipped for fighting them, and the modern woman feels that it is part of her business to fight them. The modern young woman has her faults; but her grandfather errs if he thinks that this is one of them.

The Puritan has had a bad time of it in recent literature; he is everybody's cock-shy. So much so that occasionally I fall a-wondering whether the parts may not have become reversed, so that it can now be said, not of him but of his critics, that they

> Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to.

At any rate I shall forbear to follow the fashion of throwing stones at the prude. Prudery is the vice which parodies, and thus often renders nugatory, the virtues of the puritan. In reality it is less a vice than a disease. It is a by-product of what psychologists call 'repression', that is, of an *unconscious* crushing down (usually dating from childhood) of the sexual instinct. And the cure for repression is not self-indulgence—as possessors of a third-hand knowledge of psychology sometimes think — but self-knowledge. Self-control, the strong hand keeping a rein on clearly recognised desires, is a thing totally different from repression. It is a necessary condition, not merely of the moral life in general, but also of any really satisfactory sexual life.

> The element of athletic asceticism [says Mr. Havelock Ellis] which is a part of all virility, and is found even—indeed often in a high degree—among savages, has its main moral justification as one aid to sublimation. Throughout life sublimation acts by transforming some part at all events of the creative sexual energy from its elementary animal manifestations into more highly individual and social manifestations, or at all events into finer forms of sexual activity, forms that seem to us more beautiful and satisfy us more widely. Purity, we thus come to see, is, in one aspect, the action of sublimation, not abolishing sexual activity, but lifting it into forms of which our best judgment may approve.[1]

We must go on to ask, Can the sex instinct be so completely sublimated that the individual will sustain no harm if circumstances unduly delay marriage, or render it impossible? The answer to this question will not be quite the same for everybody. The amount of strain involved varies very greatly with the individual —for some it is negligible, for others very considerable.

[1] Havelock Ellis, *Little Essays of Love and Virtue*, p. 51 (Black, 1922).

It should be noted also that it may be either increased or lightened by conditions easily controllable like diet and exercise. But on the general question I will again quote Mr. Havelock Ellis, largely because he states that he bases his conclusion on continental medical opinion, which is prepared to go much further than English or American in the direction of admitting that abstinence has bad results; and I wish to run no risk of underestimating these.

> The old notion that any strict attempt to adhere to sexual abstinence is beset by terrible risks, insanity and so forth, has no foundation, at all events where we are concerned with reasonably sound and healthy people. But it is a very serious error to suppose that the effort to achieve complete and prolonged sexual abstinence is without any bad results at all, physical or psychic. . . . The fight [between different schools of medical opinion] is only concerned with the nature and degree of the bad effects which, in Näcke's belief—and he was doubtless right—are never of a gravely serious character.[1]

Assuming this opinion to be medically sound, what follows? Simply, as so often in real life, that we are forced to make a choice between two evils. When this happens, the wise man or woman chooses the lesser. Few people decide to give up their job and 'go on the dole' because sitting all day long in a stuffy office is deleterious to health. Few people resolve never to open a book or read a newspaper again because the human eye was never meant for, and is always injured by, such kind of work. Some of us decline to cut down our daily allowance of cigarettes even when the doctor refuses to guarantee the bad effects as 'never of a gravely serious character'. An aged Head of a College in the last century, so it is fabled, once imparted to a junior

[1] Havelock Ellis, *op. cit.* p. 58 f.

Fellow the secret of long life in the rather trying Oxford climate: 'Never work after dinner—and always dine early'. I feel quite certain he was right; but I do not myself propose to purchase longevity that way.

For some, abstinence means a dreary struggle—often needlessly severe from lack of careful thought or good advice on diet, exercise or ways of sublimation.[1] The majority, I am sure, once they make up their mind to face up to it, do not find it hard to carry through—especially where the practicable alternatives, as usually happens, are sordid. The problem of specially hard cases I shall return to later.

'Free love' is not the road to happiness. There is no basis—either in scientific psychology or in practical experience—for the notion that earth will become heaven once all the old taboos are brushed away. The experiment, or something very like it, has been tried, and on a fairly large scale too—in Imperial Rome, in Restoration England, under the later Monarchy in France—and in some circles at the present day. Where is the evidence that the result was happiness? Even the enthusiasm of Mrs. Bertrand Russell consents to the admission:

> There would be passionate griefs, disappointments and broken ideals, but none of this is so damaging to human personality as atrophy.[2]

Atrophy, I grant, is worse than unhappiness—of some kinds. But happiness is the object which this particular experiment is designed to achieve; if it fails there, it is discredited. There may be other ways of averting atrophy.

[1] There are some useful hints on sublimation in *Psychology and Morals*, by J. A. Hadfield (Methuen, 1923).

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 155.

## Prostitution

It is seldom the sheer force of physical desire that impels a young man to have relations with a prostitute *on the first occasion.* Far more often it is the idea that he is embarking on a gallant adventure. Once tasted, the fruit may seem sweet and a repetition of the experience be sought from mere desire. And that desire, being one that grows by what it feeds on, may ultimately become a morbid craving, against which he fights in vain. But it began as 'an adventure'.

A friend of mine, during the war, was persuaded by a fellow-officer to accompany him to the sign of the 'Red Lamp'. Immediately on entering he felt depressed by the tawdry sordidness of the place; but when he looked at the row of girls awaiting his selection, including one who seemed only about fourteen years of age, the whole thing struck him as so pathetic that he turned to go. 'Don't run away, old man,' said his companion, 'be a sportsman!'

Looked at by the cold light of reason, it seems hard to account for the convention that something of the nature of a sporting adventure was being here declined. It is not enough to say that the sex instinct can throw a golden glow on very dismal deeds, just as a sunset can bathe a slum in momentary splendour. This power of sex is immeasurably enhanced by two causes, both remediable, which tend to an intensification and perversion, psychologically quite explicable, of the natural instinct.

First, exploration of the unknown always appeals to the sense of adventure. This kind of glamour is to a fatal extent lent to all matters concerning sex by the

quite unnecessary mystery with which it is commonly surrounded in the education of the young. Children ask questions about everything—among other things about their own bodies or about the provenance of the new baby. If they are put off with lies, or are answered in a way that suggests that the matter is a darksome and unclean mystery, their curiosity is at one and the same time both over-stimulated and, in the psychological sense, 'repressed'. The seed is sown of an emotional attitude towards sex and everything connected with it which is necessarily furtive, morbid and also over-curious. This often results in an emotional tension which enormously enhances the difficulty of physical self-control. At adolescence, it frequently gives rise to an intense desire to penetrate the mystery, which will make the mere acquirement of sexual experience seem the most alluring and fascinating of adventures.

Secondly, Nature has decided that adolescence should be psychologically a time of experiment and revolt. The forbidden, therefore, is necessarily and *as such* a challenge to youth. A growing mind, quite rightly, desires to know the reason why; and the expanding personality instinctively rebels against restrictions for which rational grounds are not at once adduced. The rational grounds for virtues like truthfulness and honour are obvious; those on which sexual morality rests are less so, and their elucidation is made difficult by the mere fact that the past has based them mainly on a hushed taboo. But for principles and ideals adolescence hungers; and it finds no discipline too severe which it imposes on itself, or which it sees as a condition requisite for the attainment of a spontaneously chosen ideal. Wherever law is seen, not as a restriction imposed from

without but as an expression of rational judgement and consent, youth is more insistent than age on its observance. No rules are so well observed as those made for or by a company of Boy Scouts. If youth 'kicks over the traces' in regard to sex, that is mainly because it has been taught wrong things about it, or taught right things in the wrong way. I feel sure that the right kind of freedom and the right kind of discussion of ethical problems would in a generation or so bring about a change in this. In any community in proportion as men become more self-determining, and therefore recognise law as the expression of their own sense of right, law-breaking ceases to seem heroic; and the discovery is made that championship of the right is in itself a high adventure. The policeman is to-day quite a popular character; while the place in the affections of the multitude once held by Dick Turpin is now occupied by Sherlock Holmes.

To prostitution, even among men who avail themselves of this institution, a repugnance, largely of an aesthetic character, is widely felt. But the main objection to it is that it is inhuman. A man who is deterred by no scruples of chastity in himself should yet shrink from conduct which means that, so far as a single individual can do anything, he is contributing his share towards the keeping in existence an institution which demands the dedication of a large number of fellow human beings to a life which of necessity is 'nasty, brutish and short'.

In the official *Report on Common Lodging-Houses* for 1927 it was noted that both the number of prostitutes and the scale of their remuneration had considerably declined of recent years, 'owing (it was laconically remarked) to the competition of the amateur'. No

further information was given in regard to 'the amateur'; does she as a rule belong socially and economically to the same stratum of the population as the man with whom she consorts, or to a slightly lower stratum? If the latter, the man cannot be acquitted of some measure of inhumanity. Such relationships are less purely mechanical than those implied in prostitution, since they commonly have some basis in mutual affection and enjoyment; nevertheless, they do involve, though in a less grossly obvious way, the sacrifice of the higher interests of the woman for the sake of temporary delectation. The fact that she shares the delectation does not justify the man in encouraging her in a course of life certain to be morally disintegrating. We blame the mother who gives a child too many sweets, however much it cries for them; still more should we blame any one who gave a dipsomaniac the drink he craved. A man who is a woman's superior in rank, wealth, experience or strength of character, cannot disclaim all moral responsibility for the consequences which a liaison may have for her, even if it be she that invites it.

There are those who defend 'the sowing of wild oats' on the ground that something like a 'trial trip' is a good preliminary to marriage. Metaphor at times is more potent than charity; it can cover a multitude, not only of sins, but of fallacies as well. Dig down below metaphor and find the fact. In this field 'experiments' change the nature of the experimenter. Action is the begetter of habit—of mind and of body. Ask, then, whether the habit of mind and body engendered by such 'trial trips' is one likely to make for or against happiness when marriage comes.

It will certainly produce instability of disposition.

I've taken my fun where I've found it,
An' now I must pay for my fun,
For the more you 'ave known o' the others
The less will you settle to one.

Again, when a man has been in the habit both in act and thought of classing together 'women and wine' as things to be enjoyed, he cannot help, so far as the physical side of marriage is concerned, tending (though often without realising it) to approach his wife as if she also were primarily a means of indulgence—that is, in the last resort, behaving as if she were not a person but a thing. This subconscious attitude of the man will produce a half-repressed antagonism on the part of the wife; and a breakdown of harmony between them is only the more likely to result if neither its origin nor its existence are clearly and consciously recognised.

Lastly, there is the risk of disease which can be communicated, often after a considerable interval of years, to the other party of the marriage, which may result in the blindness, disease or death of a child, or in the sterility or permanent invalidity of a wife. That is a class of risk which no man has the right to take.[1]

## Ideal and Practice

No one whose opinion need be taken seriously either defends prostitution or desires to abolish marriage.

Monogamy [writes Mr. Havelock Ellis], in the fundamental biological sense, represents the natural order into which the majority of sexual facts will always naturally fall because it is the relationship which most adequately corresponds to all the physical and spiritual facts involved.[2]

[1] Infection from 'amateurs' seems commoner than from 'professionals'. Cf. *Official History of the War: Medical Services* (Diseases), vol. ii. p. 121.

[2] Cf. I. Goldberg, *Havelock Ellis*, p. 204.

But Mr. Ellis, Mr. Wells and other distinguished writers maintain that sexual unions of a variety of kinds outside normal marriage should be, not merely condoned, but recognised as legitimate and even socially advantageous.

That is the real question which the sociologist and the moral philosopher have to face to-day. Some writers go so far as to say baldly that the private relations of two persons of opposite sexes are nobody's business but their own. Mr. H. G. Wells, with the wider survey of the social reformer, naturally takes a less atomistic view.

> [Men and women of the future] will evolve their own conception of restraints, imperatives, and reasonable conditions, and fashion a new code.[1]

To me it seems that what society really needs is, not a new set of rules, but a new point of view; not a new code, but a new vision. We must clear our minds alike of the Manicheeism which regards the physical side of sex as merely disgusting, and of the Romanticism which makes the thrill of 'love's young dream' the supreme spiritual value in life. Having done this, we shall see clearly that there is a proper place both for the physical and for the romantic side of sex; and that in this proper place they are both good. For rejoicing in that goodness we may quote a precedent—at least it is no surmise by some pupil of Mr. Havelock Ellis—that 'God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good'. But we shall see no less clearly that the proper place for these is not the first place. It is not the first place in any general conception of life as a whole; it is not even the first place in the relations to one another of men and women.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 760.

In marriage the richest range of love lies beyond the physical and the romantic. It must pass through these and include these, but it does not attain its maturity until these are felt to be beautiful and necessary incidents rather than essentials. Again, outside marriage there is open to men and women a relationship of a different kind; but this, too, is one of which the highest ranges can be realised only if the physical—and so far as possible the romantic also—is absolutely ruled out.

The unique advantage of the strictly monogamous marriage is that, by providing a healthy satisfaction for the instinct of sex on its physical side, it reduces mere excitation, and so makes easier an all-round self-realisation on a supra-sexual plane. Of this self-realisation, the first fruit is the lifting up of the relation of the married pair to a love which, because it faces reality and expresses itself in sympathy and service, transcends romance—and which, with the advent of children receives further enrichment.

> How many loved your moments of glad grace,
> And loved your beauty with love false or true;
> But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
> And loved the sorrows of your changing face.

A second fruit is a widening and enrichment of friendships, for the man with other women, for the woman with other men. For this type of friendship reaches its highest possibility only on condition that the idea is absolutely ruled out that it is preliminary to a relation of a physical character (p. 98). Such a friendship may, and often does, exist between persons neither of whom is married; but, except where there is some obvious impediment, like physical deformity or great discrepancy of age, it must be less unreserved and is

apt to be precarious and insecure. Perhaps the greatest enemy of the institution of marriage is the jealousy which impels either husband or wife to treat as an injury, or in the slightest degree to discourage or resist, such friendships of the other. But human nature being what it is, this jealousy cannot be transcended unless husband and wife have reasonable security that these friendships differ in kind from that unique relationship which they have with one another; and of this the only practical guarantee is the bond of honour which makes physical relationships with other persons unthinkable. Where, on the basis of this guarantee, both parties feel able to encourage one another to the freest enjoyment of such friendships, the addition of a rich variety of external friendship to the intimate sex and family life with the chosen partner brings about a fullness of life not otherwise to be attained.

To the woman marriage commonly brings children, and this is what normally affords satisfaction to the creative element in her nature, though, if there are no children, this may be sublimated in a variety of ways. Man, too, must have his distinctive creative work. For him, too, love of mate and friendship are not in themselves enough. The greatest evil wrought by the romantic tradition is that it has taught women to ignore in men a need which in their own case finds satisfaction in a different way. There is justice in the indignant protest of Mr. H. G. Wells.

> No man has ever done any great creative thing, painted splendidly, followed up subtle curiosities as a philosopher or explorer, organised an industry, set a land in order, invented machines, built lovely buildings, primarily for the sake of a woman. These things can only be done well and fully for their own sakes, because of a distinctive drive from within; they

arise from that sublimated egoism we call self-realisation. Some women have prevented and thwarted the self-realisation of men, and others have protected and aided men, but from first to last they have been accessory.[1]

I do not, however, like the word 'accessory' in this connection. A marriage is a success only if the older and nobler word 'helpmeet' is the more appropriate as a description of the wife's relation. There is nothing humiliating to a woman in being 'the junior partner of a firm'. Many great men—Darwin and Gladstone are the first names that come into my head—did what they did solely because their wives knew exactly how, when and where to remove a burden or supplement a weakness in the man. And who does not know men who, in the common phrase, have been 'made' by their wives? But the possibility of a woman doing this depends on her being in a relation to the man which gives opportunity, not for 'inspiration' in the romantic sense, but for 'mutual help and comfort' in the sympathy and practical service of daily life together; and this means that the woman is the man's helpmeet, not in the capacity of mistress, but as wife.[2] Again,

[1] H. G. Wells, *op. cit.* p. 783.

[2] In the modern world it is open to a woman to follow one of the professions, to organise a business, to write. In that case she, too, will do these things 'for their own sakes because of a distinctive drive from within', and not primarily for the sake of a man. And if she marries and continues to do these things well, then for her, too, the place of the husband will be, in Mr. Wells's phrase, 'accessory'. With a woman of genius, or one with a professional career, the husband need feel no humiliation in taking the place of helpmeet to the wife—in being, so to speak, Prince Consort to her Queen. But such cases will be exceptional, for two reasons. First, in most well-mated pairs each to some extent leans on the other; but the psychological make-up of the sexes, possibly enhanced by custom and social tradition, has brought it about that in the majority of cases the woman likes to feel that in big things she leans on the man and that in smaller things he leans on her. Secondly, when a marriage bears fruit in children, the woman becomes the one who is doing the 'great creative thing' arising 'from that sublimated egoism we call self-realisation', and the husband is the 'accessory'. This chance of 'playing first fiddle' the man can never have.

even where, as often happens, a man's work or temperament is such that he can derive inspiration, sympathy and practical help from a woman other than his wife, the extent to which he will do this successfully will generally depend on the extent to which his relation to that woman is kept on the plane of friendship rather than of romance.

Sex at the physical—and even at the romantic—level, excites; but it does not inspire, except it be first transmuted into something very different. The haunting vision of Beatrice was the inspiration of the *Divina Commedia*. But the poet's mind would have been affected in quite a different way by a successful intrigue, or even marriage, with his heroine. Dante, being the kind of man he was, would doubtless, in any case, have written an immortal poem; but it would have started from another fount of inspiration. Sex is the raw material from which the best, but also the worst, things in human life are made. The Manicheean view of it is a mistake, but it is not one without foundation in experience. The poets at times make us forget this. By the art of Shakespeare the loves of Antony and Cleopatra are clothed with a gorgeous pageant-glory; but, under the microscope of history, what actually happened makes a sorry, sordid tale. In real life Passion is a steed that must be ridden on the curb.

In the last resort that is why I believe that what is wanted is not a new code, but—along with a new understanding of its reasonableness—a more effective observance of the principle that, outside marriage, sexual intercourse is an anti-social act.

But, granted this as an ideal, must there not, considering the complex circumstances of modern life and the infinite variety of personal taste and need, be large

allowance made for exceptions to such a simple rigid rule ?

My reply is that, wherever sex is concerned, emotion is so strong and self-deception so universal that a principle to which exceptions are allowed, at the discretion of the parties themselves, is in practice very little better than having no principle at all. To call Cupid 'blind' is grotesquely to understate the facts. To be blind is merely *not* to see things which exist. Sexual excitation, doubtless, brings this about; but it also makes men see things which are not there at all, besides seeing much that *is* there in a wholly false perspective. When passion is the arbiter, my own case is always recognised to be exceptional. There never were in history lovers like 'we two', never were any kept apart by a fate as hard as ours. When Aphrodite whispers in my ear, a principle which admits no exception may nerve me to resist; but if *any* exception is admitted, my case is certain to be one.[1]

It is, we have seen, of the essence of any rule which expresses a principle of moral obligation that it binds in secret as much as in public. And in normal cases the rule in question works out to the individual's benefit. We are apt to forget how often the renunciation of a pleasure or a personal convenience for the sake of principle or public service acts as a moral tonic. A man or woman who has renounced nothing and refused nothing is a moral weakling. There are cases

[1] This principle has the additional advantage that it is one which from its intrinsic nature can admit of no 'border-line' cases. Where sex is concerned border-line cases will always by the parties concerned appear to be over the border. Which means that the border-line—for other people and for them next time—has moved on that much. If, for example, you say in framing your rule that engaged couples may behave as if already married, the rule will be stretched to cover couples secretly engaged, and very soon to couples thinking of being engaged, couples wondering what it would feel like to be temporarily engaged, and so on.

where renunciation involves real loss—I shall return to that point later. But, up to a certain point, strain and tension are necessary to development. There is no place for the athlete who has never 'run himself out', the poet who has never agonised to find the right word, or the philosopher who has found all problems easy. A route march from which no one came back tired would do little to train a battalion for the stress of war; and a code of sexual behaviour which could be kept without any effort would be spiritually enervating. A morality which has lost all austerity, has lost its cutting edge.

But though renunciation for the sake of principle is morally creative, renunciation for fear of consequences is not. For that reason, to make social ostracism, to the extent that was customary in the Victorian age, the penalty of a sexual lapse is a mistake. In regard to sex, as in regard to every other sphere of conduct, there comes a point in depravity at which society must take measures to protect itself against the individual. But excessive punishment, mechanically and unsympathetically applied, is more likely to generate hypocrisy than to raise the level of moral practice. This point is of importance. Discussions of the ethics of sex are often vitiated by confusing the value of a principle with the assessment of punishment for its infraction. We do not view sheep-stealing as a virtue because we now think hanging was an excessive penalty; we may regard Parnell as hardly treated without approving of adultery. The tendency of certain types of conduct is to be socially and spiritually constructive, that of others is to be socially and spiritually disintegrating. It matters supremely to any society that it should have a clear principle for distinguishing between these two

types, and that its average members should be able to say at once, This is on the side of right; that is on the side of wrong. It also matters, but it matters less, how many of its members fail, through the frailty of human nature, to live up to that principle. Granted in any society a clear knowledge of the right direction, then the steady pressure of the tone and example of the better elements—which always elicits an instinctive approval from the majority—will gradually lift the average standard of conduct.

Christian opinion has missed the true emphasis of the teaching and practice of Christ. On the question of what is right and what is wrong in regard to sex His attitude is unambiguous. But He shocked the religious public of His day by the leniency He showed towards offenders. He ate and drank with publicans and harlots—without disguising His opinion that they needed to repent. 'Neither do I condemn thee' was His word to an adultress—but He added, 'Go, sin no more'. 'Judge not' was said to those disciples who were to be the regenerating nucleus of a regenerated world; they were to serve the cause of righteousness, not by the severity of their condemnation, but by the standard of their own lives. They were to be 'the salt of the earth'—to be that was the adventure to which He called them. If that failed, there was no other way, 'if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it (the world) be salted'.

It is in the light of this last saying that I would approach the most difficult question of all. What are we to say about the principle of sexual abstinence outside marriage where it involves, not merely a renunciation of pleasure or even some injury to health, but what seems to be grave spiritual loss? There is

a large variety of these hard cases, but it will suffice that I take as an example what seems to me to be the hardest case of all: that of the woman to whom marriage is impossible, but who feels that, apart from motherhood, her personality cannot realise its full development and that her soul starves. In this country the number of such is at the present moment exceptionally large. A million men fell in the war, and perhaps another million are precluded from marrying by injury, disease or the widespread poverty consequent on the war. That means that, perhaps, two million women, who might otherwise have married, will not do so.

> So from the soft air, infinite and pearly,
> Breathed a desire with which she could not cope,
> Could not, methinks, so eager and so early,
> Chant to her loveliness the dirge of hope:
>
> Could not have done with weeping and with laughter
> Leaving men angry and sweet love unknown,
> Could not go forth upon a blank hereafter
> Weak and a woman, aimless and alone.

All such should endeavour unshrinkingly to bring up into the clear daylight of conscious realisation the exact nature of their needs and their desires—at the lowest as well as at the highest level. The attainment of a self-knowledge that can face up to the frank and full admission of needs, weaknesses and desires, the mere existence of which most women have been taught to ignore or to condemn, will make a demand on courage and sincerity which, adequately responded to, will be in itself the beginning of a moral rebirth. Self-knowledge of this kind is hard to reach without the help of frank discussion with some wise adviser; but it is the first condition of a redirection and sublimation of unfulfilable desires, and may make of these

the raw material of creative energy, instead of being a source of barren and exhausting, because largely unconscious, inward struggle. Sometimes it may break the power of an infatuation by revealing it as a 'projection' upon some individual of a phantasy which is really the expression of a quite other 'repressed' and therefore unrecognised desire. Always in some degree self-knowledge is liberation.

At any rate, by the unmarried, sexual intercourse without the hope and definite intention of bearing children ought, I feel sure, to be renounced. But the plea of the woman ready to bear a child, that to allow the war to deprive her and so many other women of the chance of motherhood is unnecessarily to intensify its evil consequences, stands ethically on an entirely different plane.

That plea is strong. And yet . . . not only for these, but for all whose case is hard, there is shown us, I believe, a more excellent way. All may not hear the call to follow it; but it is the way of high adventure. For the future of the world, the moral impoverishment brought about by the war is of more serious moment than the economic. In every sphere of conduct, not that of sex alone, the earth requires to be re-salted. But nowhere does there exist a salt other than the lives of men and women ready to sacrifice what costs them much for the sake of principle. To effect the moral re-creation of man Christ faced the cross; our lesser sacrifices contribute to that same end. And if at times the sacrifice required seems almost to amount to crucifixion, we can, by our mental attitude towards it, make that crucifixion to be a voluntary endurance spiritually one with that act of Christ. Then it will become a source of moral power—for others, and, *after*

*a while*, for ourselves. That pain can be made creative is the secret of Christianity. 'My son,' said a priest to one I know, 'it does not matter what you lose, so long as you offer it up alongside the Sacrifice of Christ.' It may be that the hour of darkness will extort the cry, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'; it may be a long time before there follows the deep peace that can say, 'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit'. But, however we may feel, the work will have been done.

The cross looks grim. But one thing is sure. That dream of perfect bliss which lures us to evade it will not come true.

> Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment
> Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

The primrose path of dalliance is early overrun with briars; and if we must be pierced with thorns, it is more kingly to wear them as a crown.

# IV

# FINALITY IN RELIGION

BY

BURNETT HILLMAN STREETER

# FINALITY IN RELIGION

## SYNOPSIS

### The Problem

The doctrine of the Incarnation is, in effect, the ascription of adventure to God. It asserts an emergence of the Divine on the plane of History which is in one sense *final*, but in another is the inauguration of an era of creative spiritual activity which admits of no finality.

Three weighty *a priori* objections to the doctrine:

I. Incarnation is a mythological conception.

II. The Infinite Being cannot be expressed in a finite individual.

III. The doctrine of Evolution rules out the idea that the climax of human development was attained by Christ nineteen hundred years ago.

Four considerations of an empiric nature which make the hypothesis, that somehow or other in Christ God is uniquely manifested, one worthy of serious investigation.

(1) The conviction of Jesus Himself that He was the Messiah, *i.e.* a person of unique significance for religion.

(2) The august impression made by His personality, confirmed as this is by the historical evidence for a certain quality of 'absoluteness' in His insight and character.

(3) The dynamic power of just that element in Christianity which is specifically His contribution.

(4) The creative power in History of the belief that God was made manifest in Him.

### Philosophy and Myth

The 'mythological' element in the Creed is not a defect. Religion is concerned with the *qualitative* aspect of Reality; it must, therefore, in order to express that quality, have recourse to methods akin to those of Art. If God *is* Love, then the story of the Cross brings this home to us in a way that no conceptual language can.

The fallacy of supposing that, where what is concerned is the quality of Reality, abstract terms can convey as much of truth as can a concrete picture.

Christ selected to describe Himself—and the selection can hardly have been accidental—the most imaginatively picturesque of all contemporary Messianic titles, that of 'Son of Man'.

Under this title it was psychologically possible for Him, while thinking and acting simply and naturally as man, at the same time to conceive

Himself as One destined to enter upon the exercise of wholly supernatural functions.

Barrenness of the controversy, Was Jesus, God made Man, or Man made God? Both conceptions are symbolic—of an *identity in quality* of personal life as between Jesus and the Father. But the conception, God made man, is both truer and for Religion more valuable.

### The Idea of Incarnation

The philosophical difficulty, Can the Infinite be expressed in a finite individual, perplexed the early Church and was at the back of several of the heresies. Ultimately the Church decided that the Incarnation was a 'Mystery', that is, an expression in symbolic form of what cannot be stated conceptually—a position in the last resort substantially identical with that maintained in the preceding section. But if the doctrine is to be accepted as 'true', it must come to terms with philosophy. Since, however, the issues raised touch on fundamental questions of philosophy of which an adequate discussion would require volumes, all that can be here attempted is to indicate certain salient considerations.

(1) Concrete facts are more real than general ideas. Laws of Nature are generalisations from observed facts, based on classification. But classification by its intrinsic nature is bound to ignore individuality; hence no Law will completely explain personality. All personalities differ, not in degree, but in kind; in the case of Christ this difference is uniquely significant.

To say that a great man is 'in a class by himself' does not mean that he is out of all relation to his environment. Quite the contrary; and in the case of Christ it is specially important to stress this relation.

(2) Incarnation implies limitation—and that not only in time and place. A human personality could not either *exhaustively* or *exclusively* express the Divine; it can do so *distinctively*.

(3) The essential element in God must be, not power but the purpose which directs it. If God is love, it is the essential element in Him which finds expression in the life and death of Christ.

On some alleged imperfections in the character of Christ.

The conception of Christ as 'the portrait of God' and as 'of one substance with the Father'.

### Evolution and the Classical Epoch

At the animal level, the condition of Evolution is the occurrence of individuals exhibiting some 'mutation' having a survival value who become parents of a new sub-species. With man, progress still depends on the exceptional individual; only this is so, not because he is the parent of a race of supermen, but because—whether at the level of genius or otherwise—he has the spirit of creative adventure which brings some fresh contribution to the 'social inheritance' of the community—in science, art, etc.

In science and in mechanical invention, the later worker can begin

at the point where the earlier left off. In art this is not so; a supreme achievement is not improved upon by later ages.

The occurrence of genius cannot be 'explained', but a favourable environment is necessary for its development. This implies among other things the existence of a community where there is a keen interest in the particular field in which he is to be creative.

The occurrence of the Classical Epoch is of special importance for our discussion; for we find here—at least in the sphere of art—a phenomenon to which it seems legitimate to apply the term 'finality'.

The analogy which holds in certain other respects between Art and Religion—as well as the empiric fact that the Buddha and Christ, respectively, have never been equalled, much less surpassed, by their religious heirs—suggests the existence of classical epochs in the history of Religion, and the possibility of one of these being in some sense 'final'.

### Development and Climax

Of the three great international religions, two, Mahommedanism and Christianity, descend from Judaism. The Jew was definitely marked out as the pioneer in this sphere by the 'successful simplification' of religion effected by Amos (*c.* 760 B.C.) and his successors.

Intensification and direction was given to the sense of national vocation by subsequent events—by the Reformation of Josiah (621 B.C.), and more especially by the Babylonian Exile (586 B.C.). The actual result of this was to make Israel for six centuries a nation specialised for the religious quest—with a growing 'Messianic' conviction of a supra-national destiny.

The 'Dispersion', its centrifugal potentialities being overbalanced by the universal veneration for 'The Holy City', enabled the Jew, without losing the characteristic quality of his own religion, to assimilate the best of Babylonian and Persian religion as well as something of the Greek philosophical outlook.

Thus by the beginning of the Christian era an environment existed uniquely favourable for the rise of a religion belonging neither to the East nor to the West but to humanity.

The period covered by the writings preserved in the New Testament is the Classical Epoch *par excellence* in the religious history of man.

The teaching of Jesus is another sublime simplification. We must say of it, This is either false or it is final—but the finality is of a kind which makes it dynamic for future advance.

The same thing holds, in its main outlines, of the classical interpretation of the person of Christ by St. Paul and St. John, embodied in the conception, God in man made manifest.

The analogy of Einstein and Newton may raise doubts whether, even if *we* cannot imagine any higher revelation of God, future ages may not do so. The cases are not exactly parallel; but unless scientists had *accepted* and acted upon the truth shown by Newton they would never have won the position on which Einstein built. Just so, it will only be if men live upon the highest religious truth they know, that they will reach the position from which to decide whether it is final or only a stage to something so much better as to be at present unimaginable by man.

# IV

# FINALITY IN RELIGION

## The Problem

Taken at its face value, the doctrine of the Incarnation is the ascription of adventure to God. Having along the ages prepared His way, through that Creative Spirit which dwells in the hearts of all men of good will but most clearly spake by the Hebrew prophets, for us men and for our salvation He came down from Heaven, was made man, and carried through the supreme adventure of the Cross.

But, it is held, what happened under Pontius Pilate was not an end but a beginning; it opened up a new era in the activity of the Spirit—henceforth to be, over an ever-enlarging area, creative and curative, bringing to men a clearer vision of truth and a greater power to overcome. Thus the very idea of finality is in one way alien to Christianity; but in another, it is cardinal. The conception 'God in man made manifest' is one which, as a conception, seems logically final. To man God could not more fully reveal Himself than by becoming man. Nor could He as man do more for man than for his sake to adventure all to the point of death in agony and shame.

To such a conception, however, there are three *a priori* objections—objections so weighty that to the

majority of scientific and philosophic thinkers all or any arguments in its support are ruled out in advance.

I. Incarnation in the last resort is not a philosophical, but a mythological, conception; and humanity has outgrown the need for myths.

II. The second objection is one that was felt by the Greek philosophers who resisted Christianity even more strongly than it is felt to-day. Is it thinkable that the infinite God can in any distinctive sense manifest Himself in one individual human life? Can the ocean be expressed in any single wave,

> And free Eternity submit to years?

III. The doctrine of Evolution is incompatible with the belief that the summit of human attainment is to be seen in a Jewish carpenter who lived nineteen centuries ago.

In the face of such objections any attempt to maintain a contrary view looks like an exercise in special pleading—in which no one would indulge but for the exigencies of 'apologetic'. Yet there are four considerations of an *empiric* nature which give us pause—if for no other reason, because modern scientific thought (cf. p. 10 f.) shrinks from ruling out of court any observed fact simply on the ground of *a priori* improbability.

(1) There is the fact that Jesus was Himself convinced that He was the Christ, the Messiah for whose coming the prophets had for centuries been looking. The fact has been questioned by a few, but only a very few, competent scholars. But the most eminent of these seem to me to have unconsciously allowed their purely critical judgement to be warped by their respect for the person of Jesus—a respect so profound that they would gladly think Him incapable of entertaining

a belief which to them appears intrinsically absurd. They have been tempted to belittle the evidence that Jesus thought He was Messiah by the feeling that it would have been discreditable in Him to think so. But the weight of historical evidence is overwhelmingly against them. The exact significance that Jesus attached to the term Messiah may reasonably be disputed; what is not disputable is that to the mind of any Jew the appearance of the Messiah was an event not merely of national but of world significance, and that it was the climax in God's dealings with mankind. Had Jesus been a person of low intelligence and mean ideals, or had His influence on human history in point of fact turned out to be of little moment, His personal belief that He was the Christ is a thing we should dismiss with a wave of the hand as mere delusion. The facts being what they are, many will think such a gesture a little too light-hearted.

(2) In the majesty and tenderness of the figure depicted in the Gospels we are conscious of something august—as of One whose being is rooted in immensities. This is not a thing that can be argued about; it can only be felt. Yet a scientific analysis of the historical facts goes some way to justify this impression that in Christ we are in contact with a personality of a quality which, in a sense, we may call 'absolute'; that He is not just one (not even the greatest) of a series of prophets, but, as He Himself supposed, its climax.[1] This fact, if fact it be, is one which we are not entitled to explain away in the interests of any *a priori* theory. Rather, it may quite conceivably be the kind of fact which, by

[1] This point, and the evidence on which it rests, I have developed at length in the chapter 'The Christ' in *Reality*. To the same book I venture also to refer for a justification or elaboration of other statements made in summary form in the rest of the present essay.

throwing light on the meaning of other facts—in themselves less conspicuous, or capable, if they stood alone, of being otherwise explained—necessitates a modification in theories which, apart from it, would seem perfectly satisfactory. In science it is the study of facts which will *not* fit in with an accepted hypothesis that most often leads to further advance.

(3) It is an empiric fact that Christianity has been a dynamic force in human history. It has been the cause of much that is evil, as well as of much that is good. But it will be found on examination, I submit, that the evil has been wrought by those elements in historic Christianity which are either survivals of the less valuable features in Jewish religion, or are due to later infiltrations from paganism. The good has been due, partly to the original contribution made by Jesus, partly to the way in which this element has operated as *a principle of selection and reinvigoration* in regard to what has been derived from other sources.

(4) What has made Christianity a creative force for good in history has been very largely the religious attitude resultant on the conviction that in some way or other in Christ—very man, born of a woman, living in a human environment—God not only spoke but acted. This fact, whether it be regarded from the standpoint of history or of psychology, is sufficiently remarkable to make the hypothesis that it is ultimately based on something in the nature of Reality itself one of which the truth or falsehood is at least worthy of serious investigation.

Accordingly, in the next three sections of this essay I shall attempt a cross-examination of the three *a priori* objections mentioned above. This will clear the ground for a study (p. 161 ff.) of the historical antecedents of the

appearance of the Christ, made with a view to determining how far this may be regarded as the climax of a development in some distinctive sense unique.

### Philosophy and Myth

The objector who says that, as stated in the Creed, the Incarnation is a mythological conception rather than a philosophical, I am prepared to meet more than half-way. Heaven is not a place whence the Son of God could 'come down', or whither He could 'ascend'; and no one would interpret the phrase 'the right hand of God' as other than picture-thinking. Again, only in a highly symbolic sense can the word Son—in ordinary language a relationship implying physical descent—be used in connection with God. As, however, the evaluation of the symbolic and the historical elements in this 'myth' forms the subject of the concluding essay in this volume, all I need here say is why to me the conception, just because mythological, seems in this special context to be the more truly philosophical.

Religion, unlike Science, is not concerned with that which can be weighed or measured; it is concerned with Reality in its *qualitative* impingement upon man, and to express quality it must have recourse to methods akin to those of Art—poetry, picture and myth.[1] The philosopher can, in a sense, *stand outside* Science, Art and Religion; he can see these as different ways of conceiving or evaluating Reality: but he cannot *dispense* with them without failing to see Reality at all. No less than the plain man he must see through these eyes of the soul. Quality cannot be truly apprehended so long as it is merely expressed in conceptual form; it can only be known if it be expressed, as the artist

[1] For a more elaborate discussion of this point cf. *Reality*, p. 59 ff.

expresses what he sees, in a way which evokes a response in appreciative feeling. Taken as a proposition in philosophy, the statement 'God is love' merely prompts us to ask further, How and why? Not so when read as a comment on the picture of God made man and for our sakes enduring the cross—and on that cross the historic Jesus.

I am not here pleading for the weaker brother; still less am I arguing that poetic imagination can be a substitute for conceptual thinking. What I am pressing is the obvious point that conceptual thinking from the necessity of the case breaks down when we think of God. Human conceptions are abstracted from human experience, and no one of them can be applied to God except in an analogical sense. All our thinking about God is in the last resort symbolic. But, that admitted, the fallacy at once appears of the idea prevalent in intellectualist circles that the more jejune the symbol, the nearer to the truth. Obviously, if quality exists at all in Ultimate Reality, precisely the opposite must hold. Not the most abstract but the richest symbol, not the coldest but the noblest, is that which will least misrepresent a Reality which must in its intrinsic nature transcend alike our reasoning and our dreams.

A word which includes everything comes very near to saying nothing. To use of God some bald, bare, abstract term like the Infinite, the Absolute, the Eternal, *and to leave it at that*, is in effect to say nothing at all about Him; it is merely to hand to your auditor an empty frame which he may fill in with any picture or with none. We must use such words; but if, having done so, we go on to take the richest, most concrete, vivid thing we know, personality—and that in its supreme

manifestation here on earth—and then say, *Ecce homo, ecce deus*, at any rate we do get something said. And that something may be true.

The contention that the unique relation in which Christ stands to God and to Man is one only expressible in symbolic form is certainly congruous with the language that He uses of Himself. This point becomes clear the moment we examine the meaning in contemporary Jewish thought of the remarkable title 'Son of Man'.

The vision in Daniel (vii. 13 f.)—in which the dramatic climax is the bestowal by the Ancient of Days of universal and everlasting dominion upon 'one like a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven'—had been widely interpreted (not only in apocalyptic writings like the book of Enoch but also, it would appear, by certain of the Rabbis[1]) as referring to the Messiah. This interpretation had, at any rate in certain circles, led to a conception both of the person and work of the Messiah which we cannot but style wholly supernatural. The Sunday school tag, that Jesus used the title 'Son of Man' in order to 'stress his humanity', and that of 'Son of God' to affirm His divinity, is almost an exact reversal of the truth. To an ordinary Greek the Jewish usage would have been an unintelligible freak of language; hence the title 'Son of Man' practically disappears in the rest of the New Testament; but its meaning is virtually absorbed into that of 'Son of God', that phrase being interpreted according to Greek, rather than Jewish, idiom.[2] If, however, we

[1] Cf. G. F. Moore, *Judaism*, ii. p. 334 (Harvard, 1927).

[2] In Jewish usage, and commonly in the first three Gospels, 'Son of God' is a title of the Messiah with a meaning not unlike that attached in the Middle Ages to 'Vicar of Christ'. That is to say, it implies a superlative authority and claim to reverence as the Vicegerent of the Divine; but it in

consider the earlier tradition preserved in the Synoptic Gospels, there must be significance in the fact that, whereas our Lord only rarely, and then more or less indirectly, applies to Himself the title Son of God, He habitually employs that of Son of Man.

Jesus once told His followers that one who would understand His message—that is what is meant by a 'scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. xiii. 52)—must be like a man 'bringing forth out of his store-room things new and old'. It was His own method. In His teaching there is always originality, but this is very largely shown in its selective synthesis of all that is of supreme worth in the Law, the Prophets, and the Proverbial Wisdom of olden times, and in the Rabbinic discussion and the Apocalyptic picture-thinking of contemporary religion. I do not think it can be accidental that He turned to Apocalyptic—the literary tradition most conspicuous for the use of striking images *avowedly symbolic*—to find a phrase which should convey some meaning to His own followers and also be appropriate (or at least less inadequate than any other then current) to express His own highly original conception of what the Messiah was to be and do.

In all the words of Jesus we feel the quality of poetry; to Him, as to the prophets and psalmists before Him, it was natural to use a luxuriance of imagery that has often perplexed the more prosaic West. But to suppose that, in adopting the highly poetic conception of the Son of Man, He meant to take over and interpret in a rigid literal sense all the bizarre imagin-

no way suggests that its bearer was, apart from his office, other than an ordinary human being. It would seem, however, on the rare occasions on which our Lord applies it to Himself to connote also a consciousness of a unique filial relationship. Cf. *Reality*, p. 183 ff.

ings of the Apocalyptists is unthinkable; it is equally unthinkable that He applied to His own office language which was to Him merely fanciful.[1] Perforce, then, we must ask to what central idea in His mind did this Apocalyptic symbol seem to correspond.

Certainly it had this notable feature; it made it possible for Him to entertain a conception of His work and person that was at one and the same time entirely human and yet no less entirely superhuman. He lived and worked simply and naturally as carpenter, as rabbi, as prophet—a man among other men; but it was with the consciousness that He was that One who would enter, in God's good time—probably, if not certainly, through the gateway of physical death—into the full possession and effective exercise of powers and functions of which the session on the right hand of God was an appropriate symbolic picture.

Thus that symbolic, parabolic, or (if you prefer the word) mythological, quality which we note in the Creed was characteristic of the way in which Jesus Himself thought of the position He was destined to assume—but with one, at first sight striking, difference. In the mind of Jesus, as reflected in the Synoptic Gospels, the symbolic picture of the Son of Man coming in His glory might seem to suggest an exaltation after death which has often been interpreted in an 'adoptionist' sense akin to the pagan idea of apotheosis; in St. John —and in the Creed—the idea affirmed is rather that of incarnation. Whether and, if so, how these two ideas can be combined constitutes a problem in regard to

[1] I may perhaps refer to the discussion in my essay 'The Historic Christ' in *Foundations*. The late Baron von Hügel once told me that, on the question how far the apocalyptic ideas of the age were taken literally by our Lord, and how far symbolically, I had there exactly expressed the opinion he himself had come to entertain.

which the Church has never for long been free from controversy. Even a mind so eminently modern as that of Mr. Middleton Murry has succumbed to its fascination.

> And, even to-day, there are only two things that can be believed about Jesus by those who can see the facts at all. Either Jesus was God made man, or He was man made God. It is easier and less exacting to believe the former: but the latter is nearer the truth.[1]

For myself, I must confess that of the two conceptions 'God made man' and 'man made God' neither is the more or the less exacting of belief. Both are equally symbolic; and the thing symbolised, if stated conceptually—which means abstractly, jejunely, and, therefore, on the whole less adequately—is an *identity in quality* of personal life. Either, then, both are false or both are true. But if true, then, insomuch as God is essentially prior to man, that truth is far more adequately expressed by the symbol 'God made man'. Also the questions which respectively they attempt to answer are different. For those who had companied with the Master in the flesh and listened marvelling to His words of power, naturally the primary question was 'What think ye of the Christ?' and the answer, 'A man deemed worthy to sit on the right hand of God'. But for mankind in general that which impels to questioning is the Universe, with its goodness and its grandeur streaked across with pain and evil; and that question takes the form, 'What know we of God?' For that reason, if we detect identity of quality between the Power behind the Universe and the personal life of Jesus, we state it in a form which is philosophically more true,

[1] *The Life of Jesus*, J. Middleton Murry (Cape, 1926), p. 196.

and which also meets a deeper human need, when we phrase it 'God made man'.

### The Idea of Incarnation

The philosophical objection to the idea that the Infinite Being could adequately express His nature in a finite individual was keenly felt in the early Church —more especially in the Greek-speaking half of the Roman Empire. Various theories of the relation of the Man Jesus to the Absolute Divine were put forward which had undoubtedly the merit of eluding this difficulty. These, however, were pronounced heretical by the general sense of the Church, as tending in one way or another to impoverish the conception 'God made man' by eliminating an essential part of its content. Ultimately the effort to find a philosophically unobjectionable theory was abandoned, and the Incarnation was definitely pronounced to be a 'Mystery'. But to call a doctrine a 'mystery' is either a polite way of saying that it means nothing at all, or it is the assertion that the doctrine expresses in symbolic form something which does not admit of being stated adequately in the conceptual language of philosophy. That is to say, the Church was finally driven to adopt a position which, paradoxical as that may sound, is substantially identical with that maintained in the preceding paragraphs. This identity is disguised by the highly abstract and technical character of the terminology employed. In regard to this, however, it is only fair to remember that the terms used in the dogmatic definitions were selected for their appropriateness to rebut the no less technically worded theories which were to be ruled out as heretical. Their purpose was not so much positive description as the refusal to accept

as adequate emaciated descriptions. This is the point of St. Augustine's famous phrase *dictum est tamen tres personae, non ut illud diceretur, sed ne taceretur.*

What matters, however, is, not whether we name the doctrine a 'mystery', a 'symbol' or a 'myth', but whether we have sufficient grounds for accepting it as a valid representation of Reality in Its qualitative aspect. Does it afford a true presentation of, or does it misrepresent, the character of God and His solicitude for man? Metaphysics alone—apart from considerations drawn from History, from reflection on the problem of Evil, and from the religious experience of the individual and the community—cannot provide to this question an affirmative answer. But, clearly, no affirmative answer, by whatever arguments it is supported, will seem to rest on any but a precarious foundation unless the idea of Incarnation can be stated in a way that philosophy can accept as at least not wholly irrational.

Such an issue at once raises all the large questions which from the time of Plato to the present day have been ceaselessly debated under such heads as 'the universal and the particular', 'the absolute and the relative', 'time and eternity', or 'the nature and meaning of the historical process'. On these questions philosophers hold very different views, and each has reached his view as the result of wide reading and prolonged thought. The particular problem, then, which we have to consider is one that could be treated adequately only after first building up a system of general philosophy; and this, of course, would involve a discussion—in some cases a considered refutation—of the conclusions of the leading thinkers who have dealt with these large questions. I profess no competence to do this; nor could any one, however competent, do it in a sub-section

of a single essay. All I can do is just to enumerate, in as succinct a form as possible, what seem to me to be the salient considerations which a really adequate discussion would have to take into account.

(1) Plato thought that general ideas were more real than concrete facts. But though most moderns would, almost contemptuously, dismiss that view, the analogous idea is still prevalent that the Laws of Nature are eternal entities more real than individual facts, and that somehow these Laws prescribe to facts what they shall be. Among thinkers, however, it is now generally recognised that the Laws of Nature, unlike those of man, are not prescriptive but descriptive; they represent, not something Nature has laid down as a command, but the best description man can give of the way in which things do as a matter of fact occur. They are generalisations from observations made by man; but as phenomena in order to be studied must first be classified, the validity of any such generalisation is conditioned by that of the classification of the phenomena upon which it is based. But classification, it is increasingly recognised, is a form of abstraction; it is 'a method of handling things by the simple device of ignoring their individuality'.[1] And since it is only by classifying things that the human mind can handle them in large numbers, our minds resent the existence of things that decline to fit into a class and, therefore, to be explicable as particular cases of a general law. The boot manufacturer deplores the existence of people who cannot wear a standard size. The bureaucrat resents the existence of individuals whose case cannot be stated on the official printed form. The philosopher, however, should *expect* to find that the one thing in the Universe

[1] Cf. *Reality*, p. 82 ff.

which is most recalcitrant to any system is the phenomenon of individuality—and this is at its maximum in the personality of Christ.

The question is often put, 'Does Christ differ from other men in kind, or merely in degree?' I would reply that every man differs from every other in kind and not merely in degree. Personality is not a thing to which is applicable a category of measure like 'degree'; it is a synthetic whole, always and essentially unique. Considered from the standpoint of conceptions like the Uniformity of Nature or the Reign of Law, it is an *irruption*. At the level of everyday life, the differences of kind that exist between men are rarely of world-significance; but at the level of a Napoleon, a Newton or a St. Francis, they are. The difference in kind between any one of these and Christ is even greater; and may possess an import which has world-significance as uniquely illuminating the nature of the 'over-personality' of God.

But to say that no personality can be completely explained in terms of law and that every human being, if we really knew him, would be seen as 'in a class by himself', is not to say that the personality of a genius, or of Christ, is a mere portent, a bolt from the blue, out of all relation to his environment. To show the contrary is the purpose of the sketch given below (p. 157 ff.) of the relation of artistic genius to favourable environment. So, too, the superlative irruption into history of the personality of Jesus must be seen (p. 170) to be related in a precisely similar way to an environment superlatively favourable to the emergence of a personality supremely creative in the sphere of religion. It is specially important to emphasise this relation to the human environment, since the reality of Christ's humanity

(often half-forgotten by the Church though carefully guarded in its official formularies) is vital to the idea of Incarnation. For the idea of Incarnation, that is of God *made man*, is a conception radically different from the Hindu idea of an *Avatar*, *i.e.* a *temporary appearance* of a divine being in human form. And to us it is more obvious than it was to the older theologians how largely the development and content of the individual human mind is conditioned by the social environment—education, custom, literature, etc.—in which he is born and bred. But, in this as in any other case, the effect of favourable environment is not to chain the great man down to its level, but to give him wings to rise above it. Make every allowance for the influence of the spirit of Elizabethan England, and Shakespeare is more than just an Elizabethan playwright; and to value at its highest the age-long religious quest of Israel is not to make Christ merely a Jewish rabbi.

(2) Incarnation implies limitation—if in no other sense, at least in time and place.[1]

But there is a wider sense in which a human personality could not be either an *exhaustive* or an *exclusive* expression of the Divine.

(*a*) Those aspects of the Divine which are revealed in the starry heavens and in the lilies of the field could not be expressed at all in a human personality—though, if God is personal, they are less representative than those which can be so expressed.

(*b*) Incarnation is unthinkable unless we hold that personality is a conception which can be applied to

[1] To Bishop Gore is due the credit of compelling the Church of England to face the fact that in regard to *knowledge* real humanity must imply limitation; and that, therefore, in regard to matters like science, history and biblical criticism the knowledge of our Lord must have been conditioned both by the general circumstances of the age and by His personal opportunities of acquiring it.

God in a sense which, while not of course identical with, is at least analogous to, that in which it is used of man —a question which is discussed later in this volume (p. 184 ff.). Clearly, however, God could not become man were not man already, in the Hebrew metaphor, made 'in the image of God'. It follows that, only if to other men a way is open to 'become the sons of God' (John i. 12), can one man be thought of as the unique Son.

(*c*) Though an Incarnation would appear to be the only way by which the Divine personality could in the *fullest possible* sense be made known to man, yet since that personality has through the ages operated (and still operates) directly on the hearts and minds of men, some of these must have achieved, and become capable of expressing, a very real knowledge of God. It was the Spirit—that is, God in His personal action upon the individual soul—'who spake by the Prophets'. Some of the Greek Fathers recognised the authentic voice of that Spirit in Socrates and Plato as well as in Moses and Elias; and we cannot but recognise that voice in certain teachers of whom the Fathers had never heard, like Confucius or the Buddha.

Thus from the limitation involved in the mere idea of an Incarnation we see that it purports to be, not an *exhaustive*, nor an *exclusive*, but rather a *distinctive* expression of God. It must mean an expression through human personality of the very being of God—and of the most characteristic and, if one may so speak, the central element in that being. It does not mean either that everything in the Divine finds expression there, or that nothing in the Divine is expressed elsewhere.

(3) We ask, then, what is the most characteristic and, so to speak, central element in the being of God?

Here I must refer again to my contention that Religion is an apprehension of Reality in its *qualitative* aspect, and to my argument that power is meaningless apart from purpose.[1] A crane may be strong enough to lift 500 tons, but the *power* resides in the brain that decides what it shall lift and when and where—and that brain is motived by conscious purpose. The essence, therefore, of God is to be sought in what, in anthropomorphic language, we must call His dominant purpose or character. The phrase 'God is love' is a classical interpretation of Reality on its qualitative side. Whether that interpretation is a tenable one or not, is a point open to debate; but that debate concerns the wider question of theism. The point I am now discussing is whether or no (assuming theism) the idea of Incarnation is to be ruled out *a priori* by the very greatness and infinitude of any rational conception of God; and for the purpose of this particular and limited discussion I am entitled to assume, what is argued in the essay which follows this, that personality can properly be ascribed to God, and that, therefore, the statement 'God is love' is not intrinsically unreasonable. But, if so, then the personality of Christ is so completely an exemplification, in thought, word and deed, of creative love that it is capable of being a distinctively representative expression of God.

An illustration may make this clearer. Suppose a child were to ask its father whether God is larger than Mount Everest. The father might essay the difficult task of explaining, in language intelligible to the child mind, that God is a spirit, and therefore cannot be thought of in terms of space but only in terms of quality. And suppose the child went on to ask, 'Is

[1] *Reality*, pp. 150 f., 211 f.

God cleverer than Einstein ? '—the father would probably laugh. But suppose the child were to ask, ' Is God better than Jesus ? '—the father would stop to think. Then, if he were quite candid with himself he would very likely say (not to the child, but to himself), ' Theoretically I ought to be able to say that God is better than any man—but in my heart of hearts the question is, Is God as good as Jesus ? '

There are spots on the sun, and in the character of Christ attention has been called to seeming blemishes. But it is at least remarkable that these apparent imperfections in His character only become noteworthy where *on other grounds* there is reason to believe the documentary record to be unreliable. Stories like the Gadarene Swine and the Cursing of the Fig-tree are clearly to a large extent legendary ; while the denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew xxiii. (which, from what we now know about them, seems unduly harsh) opens with an exhortation to obey, not only the law of Moses, but also that scribal interpretation of it which, as ' the tradition of the elders ', He speaks of elsewhere (Mk. vii. 13) as ' making void the word of God '. Again, if modern doubts as to the historical accuracy of the Fourth Gospel preclude an appeal to Christ's own assertion of sinlessness (John viii. 46), they equally preclude the citation as evidence to the contrary of certain details in discourses like John viii., or in the story of the Water made Wine.

It is, however, important to note that in the New Testament absolute perfection, in the sense in which the word is applicable to God, is not ascribed to Jesus. What is asserted is that He was ' without sin ', that is, He was never in conscious opposition to the will of God ; this is also put in a positive way, ' My meat is to do the

will of Him that sent me'. At the assertion that Jesus was animated wholly and singly by the Will to Good, few careful readers of the Gospels would be inclined to cavil; but absolute perfection is something different. It involves, not only the Will to Good, but absolute knowledge of the best way (under all circumstances) of translating will into deed, but Jesus 'grew in wisdom'. It must also involve immunity from temptation—but Jesus was really tempted. Moreover, such perfection is expressly repudiated by Jesus Himself: 'Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God'. And elsewhere its attainment is definitely related to the experience of the Cross—He was *made perfect* (Heb. ii. 10 and v. 8) through suffering.

Still the real problem for religion is, What is God like? It is not, How far are we justified in using the adjective 'divine' of a historic person who lived two thousand years ago? If God is not as good as Christ, then man can be nobler than his maker. But if the inmost quality of Reality *is* expressed in Christ, then God is Love—and that is the great thing. But suppose some minute trace of sinfulness could be found in the historic Jesus — in which case God must be emphasised as being *better* than Christ—what then? It might seem no longer possible to worship God in Christ; something of real value, for thought and for devotion, would be lost from the Christian tradition — and for such jettison I see no sufficient reason. But God is still Love, only in some richer sense than even the life and mind of Christ reveals.

The qualitative aspect of Reality is that with which Religion is concerned; it is also, I have argued, that which constitutes Its (or His) essential being. If that be so, not the smallest philosophical difficulty is involved

in St. Paul's contention that we see 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. On the contrary, it is a statement that commends itself to reason. Religion requires also a mental image of that which it adores. That is the value of another conception of St. Paul. He speaks of Christ as the 'portrait of God'. But the portrait and the original are *ex eadem materia*. If creative personality motived wholly by love is the very essence of divinity, then Christ is more than a mere portrait of God; He is a person who may not unwarrantably be described, in the language of the Creed, as being 'of one substance with the Father'.

### Evolution and the Classical Epoch

Below the level of human civilisation all fresh development depends on the occurrence of what biologists call 'mutations'; that is, on the capacity of a species from time to time to produce an exceptional individual, who differs from the normal type, not only in exhibiting some variation advantageous in the struggle for existence, but also in the fact that this variation is transmissible to its offspring. It would appear that it was through the occurrence of one, or more probably of a series, of such mutations—resulting in an enlarged brain and an upright gait—that the human race emerged from the ape level.

But since man became man, Creative Evolution has worked by a different method. The reason is that, in the case of man, what has been called the 'social', as distinct from the 'individual', inheritance has become relatively more important. Progress, whenever it takes place at all, still depends on the occurrence of the exceptional individual; but he plays his part,

no longer by becoming the parent of a sub-species exceptionally endowed, but by making some discovery or invention, by effecting some improvement in social or political organisation, by inculcating some new religious belief, or by communicating some fresh ethical or aesthetic inspiration, to be a creative influence in the community to which he belongs.

So far as can be inferred from their skulls or their workmanship, there is no reason whatever to suppose that modern man is superior to Paleolithic man, either physically or mentally; it is at least arguable that the average Englishman, Frenchman or Greek to-day is intellectually the inferior of the average Athenian in the days of Pericles. If we can boast of progress, it is not because we are born superior, but because we enter upon an immensely richer social inheritance of scientific knowledge, mechanical invention and political organisation, as well as of intellectual concepts and moral ideals. It is in virtue of what we thus inherit, not of what we are, that we may claim to have made advance. But this inheritance we owe to the long line of exceptional individuals by whose insight, energy and courage it has been slowly and painfully accumulated. In human evolution the instrument of progress has always been *personality instinct with the spirit of creative adventure.* Of this the most conspicuous example is the man of genius. It is notable that *physically* the genius is often weak, and more often than not is sterile. This fact affords yet another warning against the attempt to think of human progress on purely biological lines. But, while recognising the supreme importance in human evolution of the occurrence of genius, we must not fail to notice how often great results have been achieved by the combined efforts of adventurous spirits less uniquely endowed.

From the biological standpoint the creative adventurer is merely a 'variation' in the species; he has possibly some slight modification in brain structure which is the physical condition of a happy combination of an enhanced susceptibility to certain psychic interests with an exceptional power of concentrating attention. Psychologically considered, he is a person characterised by the possession of insight and interest beyond the average. In the first place, he *sees* what others fail to notice—whether it be the solution of an intellectual or mechanical problem, the beauty of a scene or the means and the opportunity for some practical achievement. Secondly, he is a man who has, along with the courage to adventure, sufficient 'capacity for taking pains' to work out—whether in artistic expression or in practical action—the vision he has seen.

The contribution made by the individual, whether at the level of supreme genius or at that of average ability, is very different in different spheres. It is of one kind in science and mechanical invention; it is of quite another in art and in religion.

In scientific research, as in mechanical invention, a thing which required genius for its discovery, becomes, when once discovered, in all its completeness the familiar possession of the ordinary man. Just as an engineer's apprentice to-day is the master of appliances which would have astounded Archimedes, so a freshman in his first term's study of physics learns things unguessed by Newton. The great scientist has permanently raised the general level of human knowledge; but, once that is done, the book he wrote, the apparatus he employed, ceases to have much more than a purely historical interest. The actual writings of Galileo and Copernicus are as obsolete as those of the theologians who tried to

refute them; just as Watt's steam engine is now a curiosity. In science, as in invention, each man can start from where the last left off, and each new success makes an older 'out of date'.

It is quite otherwise with art. Here, too, an evolution is traceable, but it is of a wholly different kind. The technical expedients employed by the poet or painter may improve; the intensity or range of experience in the life of the society which he interprets may become greater, so that in a more elaborate civilisation artist or writer may in a sense 'have more to say'. But wherever there has been achieved a really great result, it is never superseded. In the series, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, the life which is reflected grows progressively richer and more complex; yet no one of these has in the slightest degree made his predecessor obsolete.

A thing is commonly said to be 'explained' when it is seen as a particular instance of a general law. Creative personality is individual, but individuality is a fact peculiarly impatient of reduction to terms of law (cf. p. 147). In genius individuality is obviously raised to the $n^{th}$ power. Therefore the adventurous individual, still less the genius, can never be in the scientific sense 'explained'. But though we cannot explain why creative individuality should occur, we can detect certain conditions which seem favourable, perhaps even necessary, to its appearance—or rather to its successful appearance, for the phenomenon of the 'mute inglorious Milton' is one which can never be studied since it cannot be observed.

A man can add nothing of importance to the social inheritance in any field unless there is already an inheritance to which to add. There must exist a

community in which over a considerable period of years there has been a special interest in some particular department of activity before the discoverer in that department can arise. A poet is not only born, he is also made. The genius, however great, must be trained in the old before he can see the new; more than that, he must have a 'public' already educated up to the point of understanding the old—else no man could see the meaning of, much less appropriate, his personal contribution. A Pheidias would have been impossible in Jerusalem, an Isaiah in Athens. Just as a general needs a well-drilled army or his strategy is of no effect, so the genius must have behind him a nation, or a group within a nation, trained up to the point of at least partially understanding him. Of nations as of individuals it holds good that 'to him that hath shall be given'. Progress demands specialisation of task and aptitude, not only in the individual discoverer, but in the community (or at least in an important section of the community) which produces him. Periods of gestation and a tradition of concentrated interest and trained appreciation must precede all great achievement.

But at certain times and places there occur periods uniquely creative, like the century and a half of Athens' greatness, the Italian Renaissance or the Tang dynasty of China. Such epochs we describe as 'classical'; and for certain types of poetry and art there have been epochs which we might describe as being not only 'classical' but also in a sense 'final', in that it would seem impossible that such perfection in this specific *genre* will or can recur.

Epic poetry, for example, arises in many races at a certain stage of their development, and genuine epic only at that stage. But in this *genre* the Homeric

poems stand out for all time supreme—unapproached as much by the genuine epics of Persia, India, Germany or Iceland as by the artificial epics of poets like Virgil or Milton.

Sculpture, again, in the idealised classic style, attained in the Periclean age a *ne plus ultra* of development.

> No artist [says Rodin, on this point a good judge] will ever surpass Pheidias—for progress exists in the world, but not in art. The greatest of sculptors, who appeared at a time when the whole human dream could blossom in the pediment of a temple, will remain for ever without an equal.[1]

In this case it is not hard to relate the phenomenon with the presence of conditions exceptionally favourable. In a nation of athletes who always exercised unclothed, the eye of the artist was rendered hypersensitive to those infinitesimals of contour which make up the beauty of the human form. He worked, too, in the service of a religion which with a people of unique aesthetic sensibility — among whom the belief still lingered that gods had showed themselves from time to time in human shape—had become largely a worship of bodily grace.

Consider, again, the great monuments of Gothic Architecture. These were the expression of a religion which appealed alike to the acutest intellect and to the most impassioned idealism of the time, as well as to the affection and respect of the multitude. It was a religion readily expressing deep spiritual ideals in material symbols; and it was embodied in a polity claiming world-wide sway, beside which, in age and power and majesty, all then known secular kingdoms seemed

[1] A. Rodin. *Art*, p. 234, E.T. (Hodder, 1912).

upstart, petty, barbarous and mean. And architecture, being at the time the one art which had attained a maturity and mastery of its own technique, was the one really adequate means of expression on a great scale for the aesthetic instinct of the age.

Favourable environment does not of itself produce great art, but without this it does not occur; and the political and spiritual conditions which made possible the poems of Homer, the gods of Pheidias and Praxiteles, and the cathedrals of the Middle Ages, cannot and will not recur. What the future has in store no man can prophesy. It may be that in sculpture or in architecture even the greatest of these achievements will some day be far transcended—but, if so, it will be in some different mode. In the history of the human spirit there are supreme moments of expression which—perhaps because they embody an intuition of something that is eternal—can never lose their value.

Religion, I have already insisted, in so far as it aspires to interpret the *qualitative* aspect of Reality, is akin to art rather than to science. It is not surprising, then, that what has just been said of art holds true also of religion. Survey two thousand years of Indian religion; the Buddha is not inferior to the author of the Gita, nor he again to Kabir. Again, though it is more than nineteen hundred years since Christ was born, to maintain that any religious teacher who has arisen since could be styled His equal, would be grotesque.

The modern mind has been intimidated by the giant stride of scientific discovery and mechanical invention and by the majestic sweep of the idea of Evolution. A Reign of Terror has been established in the realm of thought; we tremble to whisper even to ourselves the suspicion that man in the twentieth century, master of

the secrets of Nature and manipulator of her thunders, may have anything to learn from the simple, untaught, almost barbarian days of old. This is an illusion of the imagination. In the realm of art no one submits to such intimidation. Admittedly the metal-working process by which the chisels of Praxiteles were made is out of date; not so the works he carved. At least we may take courage to inquire whether the analogy may not hold good of the great classics of religion. To the interpreter of life the intellectual concepts of his age are only a little more than tools; these may be obsolete, and yet his message have eternal worth.

### Development and Climax

The higher religions of mankind are few in number, and of these few only three, Buddhism, Mohammedanism and Christianity, have passed beyond the limits of a single nationality to become universal religions—appealing to man as man, as a denizen of the world or as a child of God, no matter what his race, or caste or culture. Buddhism to-day is relatively quiescent; but Christianity and Mohammedanism are still actively conquering fresh territory. *And both Christianity and Mohammedanism are derived from Judaism.* This is a fact which challenges investigation.

Creative departures in the development of human thought have frequently consisted in a successful simplification. We may instance the invention of the sign zero, with the convention that the value of any digit depends on its position, which gave us the Arabic system of notation, and laid the foundation of the new Mathematics which is the foundation of modern physical science. Again, it was the discovery that the observed positions of any planet could be described quite simply

as a series of points on an ellipse with the sun as focus that made possible the work of Newton, and so conditioned the whole intellectual movement of the last two hundred years.

A simplification of a very different kind, but one no less momentous for the history of religion, was that made in the eighth century B.C. by Amos and the prophets who succeeded him. For the vast majority of mankind, religion has always been an extremely complicated thing. Deities are numerous, and each of them has his own peculiar tastes in ritual and taboo; some are on the whole kindly, others hostile, but all are capricious, irrational, unaccountable. Even where one deity claims an all but exclusive worship, his demands can be satisfied only by those who have the knowledge or the wealth to offer the rightful sacrifice.

> Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah vi. 6 ff.)

That is the grand problem of religion as it appeared to the mind of the ordinary Semite. It was a revolution in human thought to give the answer:

> He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

The sublime simplification involved in the proclamation that there is only one God to whom men need give heed, and that the only thing that He requires of man is conformity to the moral law, has an importance in the development of religion comparable to the discovery

of Copernicus in the progress of science. By this the Hebrew race was marked out as the pioneer in the religious quest of man.

Genius functions differently in different fields. The scientist feels that he must *search*—for an objective truth before which all personal predilections of his own must absolutely bow. The artist feels that he has *found*; he has dreamed a dream, he has glimpsed a fairy vision—in a sense his own—to which he longs to give expression in his own way. The prophet feels that he is *called*; from his mother's womb he has been separated for a work, there has been given him a message which needs must that he deliver. 'The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?'[1]

As a people the Israelites felt themselves to be so 'called'. Jehovah had intervened of His own free initiative to bring them out of Egypt; at Sinai He had offered them a special covenant relation to Himself; He had raised judges to deliver them and prophets to teach. Nations have often supposed themselves to be favourites of Heaven; that is mere national vanity; and the conviction of the Jew that he belonged to 'a chosen people' appealed, of course, to that common human weakness. But, to the higher minds, at any rate, it meant something deeper; it implied a religious destiny and a responsibility to live worthily of it.

> You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities. (Amos iii. 2.)

The question whether the evolution of man has ever,

[1] Amos iii. 8. The above distinctions must not be pressed too far—certainly not to the extent of supposing that any hard and fast lines can be drawn as regards the psychology of apprehension in these different fields of its exercise. For a discussion of the psychological aspect of the difference between 'discovery' and 'revelation', cf. *Reality*, p. 331 ff.

in any degree at all, been conditioned by a purpose more than human; whether, that is, we can detect in history evidence of anything like a Divine guidance—is one which lies outside our present inquiry. But if on any grounds or anywhere we incline to see such overruling, then the hypothesis that Israel was selected for this special task is one that would seem to be conspicuously verified by the series of historical events which followed—events which produced over a long period of years conditions uniquely favourable for further advance along the road which the prophets of the eighth century B.C. had pointed out.

Practical reform always lags behind the vision of the idealist; and even when action is at last taken, the result is commonly a compromise between what the idealist and his followers demand and what average public opinion will accept. Such a compromise was the Reformation of Josiah (621 B.C., cf. 2 Kings xxiii.). Idolatry and the immoral practices associated with certain Semitic cults were put down; a code (probably that of Deuteronomy) was promulgated in which an increased emphasis is laid on conduct and on the religion of the heart, though the sacrificial system is still left central. Sacrifice was prohibited elsewhere than in the Temple of Jerusalem—presumably in order to keep in check the abuses and immoralities which had flourished at local shrines. In the event this proved the salvation of Judaism by giving it in 'the Holy City' a rallying centre which, making religion the supreme bond of national loyalty, could outlast political catastrophes and made possible for the people as a whole a gradual transition to the more spiritual religion which developed round the synagogue in later times.

The Babylonian Exile (586 B.C.) was a disaster so

crushing that by all ordinary notions of Semitic religion it should have been regarded as proof that the gods of Babylon were greater than the God of Israel. Doubtless many of the exiles took that view, burned incense to the Queen of Heaven and turned for protection to seemingly more powerful deities.[1] But the only result of this would be that these individuals, becoming assimilated to the surrounding population, would in a generation or so cease to be Jews. Some time, however, before the great catastrophe the prophets had sedulously taught that, unless Israel speedily showed signs of a drastic moral reformation, Jehovah would visit them with overwhelming national disaster. Accordingly, for that section of the nation which had listened to the prophets, the result of the Babylonian victory was, not the discrediting of the God of Israel, but the accrediting of that conception of His nature and requirements which the prophets taught.

Naturally those who had been most inclined to listen to the prophets were those to whom monotheism and the higher morality made the strongest appeal. Hence, while the careless and indifferent became assimilated to the surrounding population, the followers of the prophets had their convictions strengthened. Thus by a kind of 'natural selection' only the more religious Jew remained a Jew at all; in that sense the prophecy that a righteous 'remnant' would survive had an almost literal fulfilment.

Still more important was the prediction of Jeremiah (xxix. 10) that after seventy years the Lord would make the exiles to return. For it caused just those persons who most heartily accepted the teaching of the prophets, that the Exile was a penalty for national sin, to look

[1] Cf. Jeremiah xliv. 15-19.

forward with confidence to a national restoration, which their own sons and daughters might live to share. They had the strongest motive so to educate their children 'in the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord' that Israel would never again provoke Him to such chastisement. Every effort was made to secure that the younger generation was imbued with that intensely ethical monotheism which alone, it was felt, could make secure the future. What remained of the national literature was carefully collected and edited, and became the nucleus of what we call the Old Testament. There was developed a system of religious instruction, based on that collection of sacred books, in connection with regular meetings on the Sabbath day for prayer and exhortation.

A thing unknown before or since in history has arisen. A people with imperial traditions, never doubting its exalted national destiny, is left without country and without king—in that age the necessary rallying centre of a national life. A remnant deeply religious is left without temple and without sacrifice—to ancient minds the essential apparatus and expression of religion. Hope alone is left—trust that the God of Israel, if only they will make themselves worthy, will one day make a highway through the desert and lead His exiles back in triumph. Inevitably all the passion and patriotism of the race is concentrated on religion. And since for them religion is denied its immemorial expression in sacrifice and temple festival, it necessarily, and for the first time in human history, becomes purely a matter of the heart and of ordinances affecting the conduct of daily life.[1]

[1] The change from a religion, in which the supreme act was the offering of the sacrifice by the consecrated priest at the appointed shrine, for one in

This racial concentration on religion went on, not for seventy years only, but for six hundred. The majority of Jews never returned to Palestine. And those who did found there, not the Jerusalem their fathers knew, still less the Jerusalem of David's reign idealised in golden memories. National independence was no more. In Judaea, as in Babylon, the people of God was still subject to a heathen empire. The day of vindication which the prophets looked for still tarried —but it was still expected. That this expectation, the 'Messianic hope', as it is called, sometimes found expression in language instinct with national egotism and the craving for vengeance on the oppressor is not surprising. What is surprising is the ethical and religious quality so often displayed.

> The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah xi. 6 ff.)

Surprising, too, it is that the high destiny of Israel is conceived as something of more than merely national interest. To some the vindication of God's righteousness involves the subjugation of the nations who have spurned Him and His chosen people—that we might expect. We do *not* expect to hear that—

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which it centred round the weekly gathering for prayer and Biblical instruction, was in many ways analogous to that effected in Europe by the Reformation. When, however, the sacrifice in Jerusalem was after a time restored, this had practically no influence on the internal situation in the synagogues; but inasmuch as no Jew, wherever situated, would contemplate the possibility of cutting himself off from the Holy City, Judaism was saved from that tendency to multiply divisions which has so weakened Protestantism. In fact the Jew had most of the practical advantages of both Papalism and Independency, without the disadvantages of either.

In that day Israel shall be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth: for that the Lord of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. (Isaiah xix. 24 f.)

Such magnanimity—seen against the background of what these Powers had done to Israel—is sublime. So, too, is this even wider vision—

Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples. (Isaiah lvi. 7.)[1]

The race is a gifted one. Through five-and-twenty centuries of oppression its capacity for producing genius has not been exhausted. It can achieve eminence in politics, learning, art and science; and in our own age, an age concentrated on world-commerce and world-finance, that commerce and finance are largely in its hands. But for the six hundred years before Christ the heart of this nation was turned away from the interests of the great world, smarting under Gentile tyranny, yet never doubting that, though for its sins Israel for a while was punished, God would certainly and soon redeem His promise. Upon that Day of the Lord every hope, national and individual, temporal and eternal, was fixed; and on the task of making their people worthy of that deliverance were concentrated the thoughts, prayers and energies of all the best and noblest.

In the sphere of art great achievement, we have seen, is conditioned by the existence of a favourable environment. If, then, the same rule holds good for religion, it becomes comprehensible that out of such a people so

[1] The above quotations are from parts of Isaiah believed to be post-exilic. The conversion of the Gentiles is emphatically predicted in Zechariah viii. 20-23, 518 B.C.

circumstanced there should have arisen a succession of great souls of whom not a few, like the Isaiah of the Exile[1] and the unknown authors of Job and of the Psalms, attained a level of spiritual achievement such as the world had not seen elsewhere; it is explicable that, the way being so prepared, some further achievement, some supreme and final efflorescence, should be yet in store.

Intense concentration and age-long isolation might have produced—in many minds it did produce—a narrow, bigoted, unprogressive religion; but the isolation of the Jew was partly counterbalanced by the fact that, though Palestine remained the centre, it became, as time went on, a relatively smaller fraction of the whole of Jewry. Alexander the Great and his successors planted colonies of Jews in all the cities which they founded; and these 'Jews of the Dispersion' had continually spread westward. By the beginning of the Christian era every considerable city from Babylon to Rome had its Jewish quarter. Yet to the Jew of the Dispersion, Jerusalem was no less the Holy City, the focus of his hopes, the goal of pilgrimage. This fact—along with his consciousness of destiny and his burning monotheism—preserved him from a loss of nationality which, at that time, would have meant capitulation to the surrounding paganism. But situated as he was, he could hardly help gradually absorbing and incorporating into his own religion (in a form which harmonised with its own natural development) the more valuable elements in the religion of those among whom he sojourned—not by way of conscious imitation, but of that unconscious assimilation by which living minds always appropriate

[1] The author of Isaiah xl.-lv. ('Comfort ye . . .') who wrote in Babylon about 540 B.C.

from current thought whatever is congenial to their own fundamental bent. Already, as the Old Testament shows, the Jew had borrowed not a little from Babylonia —and had vastly improved it in the borrowing. So, too, without losing what his fathers had gained, he could learn from the religion of Persia and from the philosophy of Greece. From Zoroastrianism came the conceptual framework of that Apocalyptic literature which was for Judaism the source of the belief in resurrection and judgement after death. In the book of Wisdom and still more in Philo, we see how the Jew could learn also from the Greek—to see God, not only as the transcendent creator of the universe, but also as its immanent, all-pervading, ever-creating and sustaining spirit.

Thus by the beginning of the Christian era an environment had come into existence peculiarly favourable to a new advance. The fullness of the time had come. Christ appeared at a moment—probably the earliest possible moment[1]—when there could be fused into a new organic whole the best that the Jew of Palestine had learnt from Moses and the prophets, from Babylon and Persia, with what the Jew of the Dispersion had learnt from Greece. For the first time in history it was possible for a religion to arise which belonged neither to the East nor to the West—but to humanity. But this synthesis of East and West was not brought about by compromise or compilation at some round-table conference of thinkers or divines. It was the deposit of a mighty wave of Creative Spirit finding expression first in the Master Himself, then through His interpreters, especially St. Paul and him we call St. John.

[1] Philo, who represents the high-water mark of the interpretation of Alexandrian Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy, was a contemporary of Jesus.

The three-quarters of a century which ends with the writing of the Fourth Gospel is the classical epoch in the history of Hebrew religion—comparable to the period from Aeschylus to Plato in the literature and art of Greece. In it we see the summation of the centuries —the climax of achievement, in its own special field, of a people exceptionally endowed and exceptionally situated.

But in the spiritual heritage of man the New Testament is unique in a sense in which the literature or the art of Athens is not. Historical and cultural conditions which make possible the production of great literature and great art may and do from time to time recur. England has produced a literature, Italy an art, which may claim to rival that of Athens. Nor can any man plausibly argue that in literature or art the future may not have even greater things in store. But the phenomenon of one of the most gifted races of mankind, and that a race already notable for depth and fineness of religious insight, compelled by historic circumstances so exceptional in character to be for six centuries a nation of specialists in religion, is a phenomenon without parallel in history; and it is beyond the bounds of reasonable probability that it will occur again. If, then, within the range of human achievement anything approaching to finality is possible, we should expect to find it here.

Once again we find that successful simplification is the essence of the new advance. The seven and a half centuries which had lapsed since Amos spoke had brought to religion great enrichment, but also much of complication. God is just—but does that mean principally the avenger of wrongdoing by devastating punishment? He is holy—does that mean awfully unapproachable?

He is almighty—does that mean One primarily to be feared? He is merciful—does that mean placable by sacrifice or entreaty? He is Sovereign, King and Judge—does that mean One demanding slavish obedience to all the minutiae of an elaborate code?

Jesus sweeps away all hesitations, all elaborations, by the simple affirmation, God is the All-Father, better than the best, wiser than the wisest human parent—therefore One ever seeking to heal and save, entirely to be trusted, purely to be loved. To be great is to be Godlike, therefore the greatest man is he who best loves and serves his kind. God's children are all brothers, therefore 'love thy neighbour as thyself' is the only law. God is the God of the living, not of the dead, therefore His love is sufficient guarantee that His children can attain eternal life.

Systems of metaphysic pass away; legislation requires amendment from year to year. But Jesus did not think metaphysically of God; He did not lay down laws for man. He had the poet's mind; His method was the artist's. The Sermon on the Mount, parables like the Good Samaritan or the Prodigal Son, belong to the world's great literature. The poems of Homer, the plays of Shakespeare, will grow obsolete sooner than the words of Jesus. Yet by this method clear principles are set forth, of which we are compelled to say that, if valid at all, they are valid for all time—they are either false or they are final.[1] But if we say this, the finality we speak of is not that of a static achievement, however magnificent. We are not invoking 'a faith once delivered to the saints' in order to hamper the life of the present and to bind the future by the shackles of a mighty past. For essentially they are principles of

[1] Cf. *Reality*, p. 207 ff.

progress. To love God means to strive better to understand Him; 'be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' is not the statement of a static ideal. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' implies a compelling impulse to practical experiment in the amelioration of custom, law and institution, which cannot but be inexhaustible. If taken seriously, it must inspire to constructive effort in an infinite variety of circumstances under any conditions and in any age. The principles proclaimed by Christ, so far from being incompatible with evolution, are necessarily a dynamic stimulus of future advance. If, then, we use of them the word 'finality', we mean a finality which consists, not in having arrived at the end of the journey, but in having once and for all discovered the right road.

Admittedly the last and greatest of the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, believed that He was also something more—the Christ whose appearance was to be the climax in God's dealings with mankind. But Messiah was a characteristically Jewish concept, and within the limits of strictly Jewish thought a crucified Messiah was a mere absurdity. For that reason it was left to those of His followers who belonged to the Dispersion, their minds fertilised by contact with the philosophy and mythology of the Hellenic world, to find a deeper meaning in His life and death, and to interpret His uniqueness in terms of thought intelligible to the larger world. By simple folk, whose intuition found its natural expression in symbolic story, He is pictured as 'born of a Virgin', 'ascended into Heaven', 'sitting on the right hand of the Father'. By thinkers like St. John He is seen as the emergence into the plane of history of the immanent Divine, 'the Word made flesh'. Granted that Jesus was right in likening the character

of God to that of an ideal Parent, then the conception that in the life and death of Christ the inmost nature of God is mirrored gives new definiteness of outline, as well as richness of content, to man's apprehension of God. For the imagination it gives this a focal *point d'appui*. 'No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son he hath revealed Him.' Intellectually it is not greatly a complication, ethically and devotionally it is an immense enrichment, of religion, to say that the perfect human life is a veritable expression of the Divine; that personality, showing itself as that heart of love which will give 'the utmost for the highest', is of the very stuff of which Divinity consists.

Here, again, we have a set of conceptions, forming a synthetic whole, about which it is hard not to say, This is either false or it is final. But, again, it is a finality more than compatible with evolution; for it sees History as a revelation of the love of God, which culminates in the Cross only because that is the initiative act of a moral re-creation of which the full glory will not be evident till the Kingdom of God shall come.

The revelation of God to man in Christ and His regenerating work are continuous and ever expanding. To be a Christian is not just to learn by heart the spoken words of Jesus or to endeavour to imitate *externally* the acts recorded in the Gospels. It is to reproduce—feebly, perhaps, yet in a new and individual way—the life behind those words and acts. Various metaphors have been used to express this—to be 'in Christ', to have Christ 'dwelling in the heart', to be 'a limb of His body'. These are metaphors; but they express a fact and a relation not the less real because it can only be expressed in metaphor. Jesus of Nazareth was a

religious reformer, working under the peculiar social and economic conditions of Palestine *c.* A.D. 30. In the thirteenth century one who, like St. Francis, was a religious reformer did well to attempt an imitation even of the external conditions of His earthly life. But the great majority of Christians are called to other tasks. The soldier, the trader, the artist must daily face actions and decisions to which no obvious analogy can be found in the historic life of Jesus. But if they freely yield up their hearts to the vision of God as seen in Christ, their words and deeds come to be determined by, and to be an expression of, His spirit. Just in so far as this is so, their lives constitute an extension of His life into new areas of activity (p. 208); and thus their words and deeds may actually enrich that original historic revelation of God in terms of human life—as well as helping to carry on the constructive work which Christ began (p. 240).

But, some one will say, suppose it be granted that in the hypothesis, that in Christ God is in man made manifest, there is expressed the truest conception of God that man has so far reached; granted also that it is one than which we cannot even imagine something better—what then? Fifty years ago it was supposed that Newton's formulation of the law of gravity was similarly a terminus of human thought; Einstein has gone beyond Newton.

The instances are not exactly parallel. In theology —that is, in intellectual formulation of conceptions like Incarnation—there has been in the history of Christian thought, and there should continue to be, constant advance. But Religion, we have seen, is concerned not with the abstract structure, but with the qualitative character, of Reality. Any new 'hypothesis', then, must, if it is to be better than the old, bring some

enrichment to our apprehension of Its, or His, inherent quality. Progressive attenuation in the conception of God is the way of advance neither for philosophy nor for religion.

This point conceded, I take up the challenge implicit in the analogy with Newton. It was not by rejecting Newton's hypothesis, it was by accepting it, and by acting upon what was then the truest thing men knew, that science was able to move forward. And it will be by accepting this our 'hypothesis'—accepting it in the truly scientific sense of using it as the basis of practical experiment, in will and work and prayer—that man will discover whether it be indeed the final hypothesis, or only the highway to one of such grandeur that to-day it cannot even enter into the heart of man to conceive.

# V

# OBJECTIVITY IN RELIGION

BY

JOHN MACMURRAY

# OBJECTIVITY IN RELIGION

## SYNOPSIS

### The Idea of God

Religion centres in the assertion of the existence of God. The meaning of this assertion depends on what the idea of God is. God is the religious name for the supreme reality, therefore religion must assert the *objective* existence of God. It is wrong to use the term 'God' to denote the ultimate reality without reference to the character of this reality. To assert that God exists is to assert that ultimate reality is personal, since religion cannot but attribute personal characteristics to the reality which it claims to experience.

### The Idea of Individuality

The difficulties which most thoughtful people feel in attributing personality to God arise from the categories of thought which we habitually employ. These, in turn, are derived from scientific thought and expounded by modern philosophy. They centre round the conception of unity. The two great phases of scientific thought are based upon two distinct conceptions of the individual unit. The sciences of matter begin with the conception of the mathematical unit, which in its application to reality gives us the numerically individual. Mathematical units are all identical, and all unchangeable. All complex unities of this type are describable in terms of the spatio-temporal or external relations between the units composing them. The sciences of life, on the other hand, depend on the conception of an organic unit. Such units are essentially changeable. They grow, develop or evolve. They are also not identical, but qualitatively variable. Hence an organic complex is composed of units which are qualitatively distinct, and the unity or complex is maintained by a balance or harmony of functions, each unit contributing its own peculiar element to the whole. Such complexes, since they depend on a qualitative variation in the units composing them, cannot be described in mathematical terms. The organic unit, therefore, when applied to reality, yields another conception of individuality, that of the functionally individual. Neither of these scientific conceptions of individuality can be applied to God, since in both cases the individual is such through limitation, and in both cases particularity and universality are mutually exclusive.

## Personal Individuality

Persons, however, cannot be described in terms of either the mathematical or the organic type of unit. In personality the individual and the universal, so far from excluding one another, are essentially reciprocal. An individual is a person through self-transcendence, or objectivity. This conception, although unfamiliar to analytical thought, is really a commonplace of human experience, and can be exemplified in every sphere of human activity. Self-transcendence is easily recognised if we examine the idea of responsibility which is inseparable from personal individuality. A person is responsible precisely because his individuality consists in his power to act for and live in and through other individuals. There are degrees of self-transcendence. Genius depends upon a high degree of self-transcendence in one sphere or another. The higher the degree of self-transcendence, the more unique the individuality of the genius. In cases of extreme powers of self-transcendence we talk of universality, as when we say that Shakespeare is universal. Absolute personality would therefore involve absolute universality in all aspects and spheres of activity, and this absolute universality would imply an absolute uniqueness or individuality. There is therefore no ground for hesitation in applying the idea of personality to God, since an absolutely universal personality must be an absolutely unique individual. The immanence and the transcendence of God are not mutually exclusive characteristics, but simply the absolute expression, in their necessary reciprocity, of the fundamental nature of all personality.

## Universal Personality

The central difficulty in religious conceptions is to combine personality with universality. An illustration of this may be found in the cleavage between the legal or 'priestly' and the personal or 'prophetic' attitude in the Old Testament. The priestly type, in seeking to achieve universality through law and ordinance, sacrifices personality. The prophetic type in its insistence upon personality loses its hold upon universality and objectivity, and becomes merely individual and aesthetic. Though it moves on a higher plane than the 'priestly' religion it cannot bridge the gulf between the personality of the prophet and the personality of his God, nor the other gulf between the spiritual value of its conceptions and the hard realities of the world of fact.

## Hypothesis of an Incarnation

The aesthetic value of the prophetic conception can only be objectified through the hypothesis of an incarnation. Such a hypothesis roots the aesthetic conception of the nature of the divine in a fact of history, and therefore the hypothesis can be tested by the ordinary empirical methods familiar to science. The question to be tested will be whether the personality to whom a divine character is attributed is in fact universal.

### Conditions of the Hypothesis

It is the condition of any scientific hypothesis that it should be inherently reasonable, and that it should be possible to test it empirically. The historic individual chosen as the bearer of divine personality must pass two tests. He must make a high appeal to our sense of spiritual value, and he must not himself reject the hypothesis by a sense of spiritual imperfection. There is reasonable ground for believing that the personality of Jesus of Nazareth satisfies these conditions. The idea of the Incarnation of God in Christ is therefore, in the absence of any comparable rival, a legitimate working hypothesis.

### Verification of the Hypothesis

The Christian hypothesis is a claim that the human personality of Jesus is completely universal, that the whole unitary process of reality as we know it can be understood in terms of Him. There are grounds for supposing that this claim is not inherently absurd. The experience of men in all walks of life shows that the personality of Jesus has the power to vivify all aspects of human activity, and to raise them to higher levels. In the historical field it is at first sight surprising to discover how closely the development of the world since the beginning of the Christian era is linked up with the impact of the personality of Christ upon it, and it is conceivable that pre-Christian history may be finally understood only with reference to the type of Christian civilisation in which it reaches its culmination and fulfilment. The problems concerning the unification of nature and spirit are more perplexing. Yet here too there is at least some ground for believing that the universality of the personality of Jesus can be maintained. The spirit of Christ comes far nearer to solving, in practice at least, the problems of pain and evil than anything else.

### Alternatives to the Hypothesis

These considerations do not verify the hypothesis. They merely indicate its reasonableness, as a hypothesis, and the lines along which the verification must proceed. They also show that it is susceptible of empirical and scientific treatment. If it is rejected two alternatives remain. Either religion must be thrown overboard altogether, or it must give up all claims to objective validity. The tendency to treat religion as a primitive and outworn form of thought has been steadily decreasing in recent times. The second alternative, however, is widely accepted, even in religious circles, though without full consciousness of what it involves. But religion cannot give up its claims to objective truth, and there can only be one truth. Religion must either include science and art and morality, unifying these in a complete conception of personality, or find no place at all.

# V

# OBJECTIVITY IN RELIGION

## The Idea of God

The whole of religion is rooted in the idea of God. It seeks and claims to find experience of God, both theoretically, as knowledge, and practically, as fellowship and communion. However varied may be the diversities of religious belief and of religious practice, however many-coloured and motley the conceptions of the nature of the Divine, and of the means of spiritual co-operation with the Divine, all religion centres in the practical belief that the supreme reality is God.

The question whether God exists, provided that it is properly understood, is therefore the fundamental question about religion. It raises all other issues with it. But it is a question that lends itself to easy misunderstanding. That existence cannot be demonstrated is a philosophical commonplace. If there is to be any divergence of views, it must be common ground that something exists. Over the nature of the 'something' disputation may arise, over the sheer fact of existence there can be no debate. Indeed there is a sense in which everything that can be named or thought must exist, even if only as a word or an idea. As an idea, God certainly exists, potently and effectively, for good and ill, as all history bears eloquent witness.

Yet when we assert or deny that God exists, it is not this that we mean. We may, we cannot but admit this subjective existence of God, yet we may quite well doubt whether God has any *objective* existence. We may question whether men are justified in entertaining the idea of God, whether the idea is veridical or fictitious, fact or fancy. In a word, we may ask whether God is *real*. The heart of the religious assertion is its claim that God is real, and no product of human phantasy. If we assert this we must assert more, that God is the ultimate reality, while all other reals are subordinate and derived, enjoying only a borrowed and dependent reality. When we remember this, the question of God's existence becomes the question whether God is the supreme reality.

Even in this form the implications of the question hardly appear in their true colours. At many periods, perhaps particularly of recent years, the term 'God' has been employed to denote the supreme reality, however the fashion of the hour might happen to conceive it. God has been described as matter, or force, as life or the *élan vital*, as the Absolute, and in other such ways. This is an illicit and misleading manner of speech. The idea of God (as will become clearer in the course of this discussion) belongs of right to religion, and cannot with propriety be saddled with a meaning inconsistent with religious demands. The assertion that God exists, that God is the supreme reality, is in any real context a religious assertion, and the meaning of the term 'God' is determined thereby. So far as it is a living issue the assertion means that the supreme reality can only be properly described as God. So put, the question reveals the real alternatives. 'Is the supreme reality of the world properly

described as God or as matter or as life, or in some other way ?

To answer this question is not the purpose of this essay. Rather it seeks to define the conditions under which an answer in harmony with the religious view would be possible. How can the question whether God is real be brought within the scope of an unprejudiced scientific inquiry ? How can religion become objective ? On what conditions could we admit that the knowledge of God which religion claims is properly knowledge ? On what conditions can there be any real argument about the truth or falsity of the propositions in which a religious experience expresses itself ? These are alternative versions of the issue which is here brought forward for consideration. I propose, in fact, to accept provisionally the religious assertion of the existence of God, and proceed to inquire what are the conditions of its verification.

We have hewn a rough way to the proper import of the question whether God exists. The proposition means that the ultimate reality of the universe is such that it can satisfy religious demands. God is therefore necessarily personal. On no other terms can the demands of the religious experience be satisfied, since the relations which are the stuff of religious life are personal relations. God must be judge, confidant and helper. Can prayer be addressed to the impersonal ? Can we have fellowship with a tree or a rabbit ? There can be no question of an impersonal God. The phrase is a contradiction in terms. The religious assertion of the existence of God is either the assertion that the supreme reality is personal or it is empty of any specific meaning. It may, of course, be argued that the supreme reality is not personal ; but it should be clearly under-

stood that to do so is to defend an atheistical position, and to deny that religion is objectively true, however essential to human well-being we may admit it to be. The idea of God, whether it be a real or a fictitious idea, is emphatically the idea of a Personality, responsible for the existence and character of the universe, constituting the ultimate reality of the world, in terms of which alone life and nature can finally be understood.

### The Idea of Individuality

That God is personal is thus a mere tautology, a definition of the meaning of terms. That God is real is the fundamental postulate of religion. For philosophy the question to be examined is *whether reality can be personal.* Most thoughtful people in our time find difficulty in answering the question in the affirmative. The hesitation has its roots in logical and philosophical, and not really in religious, ground. Our ideas about personality, as we know it in experience, imply limitations which are inconsistent with the infinitude of God. A person is an individual, and how can God at once be an individual and yet immanent in the world? How can God be at once a particular person and at the same time the unity of all things, 'in whom we live and move and have our being'? How can we reconcile the infinite goodness of God with His infinite power, in face of the problem of evil? The transcendence of God may seem to save His goodness by allowing us to attribute the origin of evil to some other source, but what then becomes of His absolute power? How can He then be responsible for the world, its creator and sustainer? And if these difficulties force us to the faith that evil is only apparent, that from the standpoint of God all is as it should be, do we not, in the effort to

save His goodness, destroy His personality, since for persons evil must be real ?

These are ultimate problems which we cannot pretend to solve, nor even to discuss with any pretence to completeness, in a short essay. But if our discussion is not to founder before we have left the harbour we must try to indicate, however briefly, that the philosophical grounds which make us hesitate to apply the conception of personality to God are not sound. We must show at least that the idea of a personal God is not obviously self-contradictory. Now our trouble arises, it seems to me, from an inadequate notion of the nature of *human* personality, derived in large part from modern philosophy, which reflects the development of modern science. Modern science has two large domains, the field of the physical sciences which deal with matter, and the field of the biological sciences which study life. The type-form of the first class of sciences, mathematical physics, was the first to develop, and its categories of thought are expounded and reflected in the philosophy which derives from Descartes. Kant, who worked out to the full the philosophical implications of this phase of European thought, reached the conclusion that the limits of human knowledge, in the strict and scientific sense, were the limits of the application of mathematics to the world of experience. But he also discovered that this world of scientific knowledge, when considered as a whole, was self-contradictory, and that beyond it lay the world of ultimate reality, which must be, in the strict and scientific sense once more, entirely unknowable.

But in the first half of the nineteenth century, under the impulse of the Romantic movement, and upon the basis of the work of Kant, a new form of thought was

developed, which made possible the new sciences of evolution. This new thought was not mathematical but organic. Its concepts were not quantitative but qualitative. Growth and development, adaptation and functional interconnection were its key-words. It provided a set of ideas in terms of which the mind could deal with life, just as the mechanical conceptions of the earlier physical sciences had enabled us to comprehend the world of inorganic matter.[1] The enormous advances which our knowledge has made under the influence of evolutionary and organic conceptions are now familiar to every one. What is perhaps not so familiar is the distinction between the organic and the mathematical conceptions on which the two types of science depend. Kant's world of knowledge was in fact the world of matter, to which mathematical conceptions are adequate. His unknowable reality was, in part at least, the world of life: and it is life which has become comprehensible, and has been brought within the confines of scientific knowledge, by the ideas grouped around the concept of Evolution.

Our knowledge of these two spheres of experience depends upon two distinct conceptions of unity. The unit of matter is a mathematical unit; that is to say, it is a unit which is itself unchangeable. It may enter into relation with other similar units, but these relations remain external to it: they do not affect its internal constitution. It follows that all complexes of such units can be completely accounted for in terms of the

[1] The importance of the distinction between organism and mechanism is in no way affected either (1) by the fact that the methodology of science compels the researcher in physiology or organic chemistry to use the concept of mechanism as an instrument of investigation, or (2) by the possibility (cf. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 145) that the new light which is being thrown on the structure of the atom may compel physics also to make use of the conception of organism.

external, spatio-temporal, or quantitative relations in which the component units stand to one another. On the other hand, the unit of life is essentially a changing unit. Its main characteristic is that it grows or develops; and this development is not an external relation imposed upon it mechanically from without but an inner characteristic of its own nature. Such a unit is the simple organic cell. Further, as a result of this essential characteristic, organic complexes are not aggregations of separate units held together by an external force, but individuals developed from a single cell in the process of its growth. Their unity is functional, each unit cell being differentiated within the whole and assigned a special function which it performs for the whole. For these reasons a complex living individual cannot be understood in terms of the quantitative or spatio-temporal relations which exist between its constituent parts. What constitutes its individual unity is the qualitative variety of its parts, and what maintains its unity is the capacity for spontaneous variation through growth which belongs to the constituent cells. It is through the perpetual variation of these that a functional harmony, a continuous adaptation of part to part and of the whole to its environment, is maintained throughout processes of continuous change. Such a unity is functional, qualitative and organic.

It was the work of the Romantic Revival to make this distinction clear, and the thought of the nineteenth century was governed by the idea of organic unity. Life can only be understood in terms of functional relations, and all living complexes are unities of the organic type. For our present purpose the importance of this new concept of the organic individual lies not so

much in the field of biology, where it has been supremely successful, but in the field of the human sciences, whether individual or social, in psychology and sociology, and in the philosophy of the State, of morality, and of social life. In this field the substitution of organic for mechanical conceptions completely transformed the situation, and found its classical expression in the organic theory of the State, a theory first sketched out by Rousseau and developed by a line of great philosophers such as Fichte and Hegel in Germany, and Green and Bosanquet in England. In terms of this theory the State is no collection of self-contained individuals held together in a sort of mechanical unity by the operation of an external force—the power of law; but an organic unity of individuals, each of whom performs a specific function in and for the whole, and where variation of function and qualitative difference in the individuals comprising the State is essential to the purposive unity of the whole.

We have here two forms of individuality, which we may call respectively numerical and functional. In terms of the mechanical or mathematical idea of unity each individual in a complex is a unit, pressed as it were into the whole by a compelling force outside it, but not drawn into the unity of the whole by something in its own constitution which requires to be supplemented by other qualities in other units. In terms of the organic conception of unity, the individual is not a mathematical unit in an aggregate of such units, but a functional member of a society of varying individuals, an organ of the whole. Such an individual cannot exist apart from the whole in which it functions, and the whole is not the sum of individuals, but the organic inter-connection of members with differentiated functions.

Neither of these conceptions makes it possible to conceive of a personal God. Personality is in its nature individual, and the idea of God involves complete universality. How then can God be at once the whole of reality, and an individual person ? On the numerical conception of individuality, all individuals are essentially identical, and therefore God must be conceived as one person amongst others without essential difference from them. How then can He be the whole in any sense ? If God is the Whole, as Spinoza, thinking in terms of such numerical individuality, believed, then He alone can be individual, and all finite entities are mere limitations of God and not real individuals. Further, God, if He is so conceived as the one individual, cannot be personal, since a person cannot exist apart from other persons. The stuff of personality consists of social relations. The religious outcome of such a conception of individuality is necessarily a materialistic pantheism. The functional idea of individuality seems at first sight to promise more than this. It allows for differentiation of functions and for qualitative variety in the individuals composing the whole. But it also fails to achieve a personal conception of God. If the individuals in a society are persons, then from this point of view the whole which they compose, through their functional relations to one another, cannot be personal. It must be either less or more than a person. No organ of the body can be itself a complete organism. If persons are ' organs ' of a social whole, then the society itself cannot be a person. If the social whole is a personality, then its individual members cannot be themselves persons, but only functions of a single personality. The functional conceptions, when applied to religion, result of necessity in a ' higher pantheism ', a pantheism which

conceives God as the life of the Whole, or as the living Whole itself.

This analysis, it seems to me, lays bare the very roots of the struggle between science and religion; as well as those of the difficulties which so many religious persons have found, and do find, in the attribution of personality to God. Whether we think in terms of numerical or functional individuality, we find that the conception of individuality implies limitations which we cannot attribute to God.

If God is a person, He must in some sense be an individual. He cannot be the only person. How then can He be the ultimate and absolute Reality of the world? Individuality and universality are at war with one another. How can there be a universal personality? How can there be an individual who is not subject to limitation? Must not all individuality be possible only through limitation, whether it be numerical or functional limitation? How can the part be the whole? How can any organ be the body? How can the individual be universal?

## Personal Individuality

These questions seem utterly unanswerable, and yet the answer is simple. Personal unity is neither numerical nor organic. It is a third type of unity in which individuality and universality are not contradictory but reciprocal. Such a statement may seem monstrously absurd when stated in terms of analytic thought, but that is only because our forms of thought are as yet palpably inadequate to the nature of personality as we know it. In fact the reciprocity of individuality and universality in human personality is one of the most familiar features of our concrete experience, and

upon it the whole nature of our social life depends. We are persons indeed only so far as our consciousness transcends the individuality of the bodily organism. We could not even conceive the world as external to us if it were really and merely external. We could not advise our friends in their difficulties unless we were able to enter sympathetically into their situation and leave our own individuality behind us. The hall-mark of all personality is its self-transcendence, or, if you will, its objectivity. As reason, personality is our power to comprehend, in an individual consciousness, an objective universe, while at the same time remaining consciously parts of it. As imagination or sympathy, it is the power to enter into the life of nature and of other persons, without ceasing to be ourselves. In practical affairs it is this characteristic which makes it possible for one person to represent or act for another, and upon this moral responsibility is grounded. For personality is moral precisely because we must act as persons with a consciousness of other persons, of our essential unity with them, and of our responsibility for them.

The idea of responsibility goes to the root of the matter, for responsibility is of the essence of personality. Responsibility can only be borne by individuals, but equally it is only possible through self-transcendence. Cain's question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' is not merely the denial of responsibility, but of personality. 'No man liveth unto himself.' Rousseau's doctrine of the General Will, and its modern equivalents, are attempting to express this fact. They fail because they are couched in organic terms. It is not the bare fact that our lives are interwoven with the lives of others that makes Will objective and social. That is equally true of the lives of animals and even of plants.

It is because each of us as an individual centre of consciousness knows this fact, and acts in view of this knowledge, that we are persons. To act responsibly is to act at once as an individual, and for society, transcending individuality. As persons we feel a responsibility for the communities to which we belong. Blots on the scutcheon of our country touch us to the quick. The triumph of the trade union to which we belong is felt as a personal triumph. We live in the lives of our intimates and associates. The deepest and most personal responsibility of human life is our responsibility for our children, in spite of the fact—perhaps one should say *because* of the fact—that they are separate personalities. The more we think over these and similar examples the more clear it becomes that personal individuality, so far from being incompatible with self-transcendence, is constituted in its very essence by self-transcendence. To one who will think concretely of human relations Christ's paradox that 'He that saveth his life shall lose it' reveals itself as a simple commonplace of experience, expressing the essential self-transcendence of personality.

This self-transcendence which is the essence of personal individuality has its own measure and degree. Some persons are more self-transcending, more universal we sometimes say, than others. The great personality is marked out from his fellows by the greatness of his self-transcendence. Shakespeare's greatness is precisely his imaginative universality, his power of living, as it were, the lives of other persons for them. What is most pertinent to our immediate purpose in this is to notice that the degree of self-transcendence is the measure of individual uniqueness. The more a person can lose himself in the life of the objective world, the

more he stands out as a unique individual. The more universal he becomes, the more individual he is. Nor is there any need to appeal to the ranks of genius for our examples. Two friends, two lovers who lose themselves in one another, find their individuality thereby enhanced, and not diminished. Our finest achievements are not the less our own, because they are made possible only through the influence and inspiration of human companionship. The wider the range and the deeper the penetration of our interests, the more human, the more individual, the more personal we become. In a word, the more universal a person becomes in his self-transcendence, the more unique does he become in his individuality.

There is therefore no ground for hesitation in ascribing personality to God. Absolute personality, in terms of our analysis, must involve absolute universality and absolute individuality at once, each of these qualities being the condition of the other. The immanence of God is not at war with His transcendence. These are two aspects of the one fact. The transcendence of God is His unique individuality; His immanence is His absolute universality; and these are therefore not peculiar characteristics of Deity, but the fundamental characteristics of all personality carried to their infinite limit. What is human love but the immanence of one human personality in another? Yet it does no violence to the unique individuality, the transcendence, of either. However difficult it may be to formulate simply and logically the facts that we have been considering, it is at least clear that the limitations which hedge the numerically or the organically individual do not circumscribe the spiritual life of persons, nor infect personalities with the externality and separateness which we

consider, rightly or wrongly, to be characteristic of other finite entities. To realise this is to dispose of all objections to the conception of a personal God by destroying their tap-root. The idea that the supreme reality is an infinite personality is not self-contradictory, unless personality is conceived upon a false analogy with the individuality of non-rational or unconscious forms of being.

### Universal Personality

Our starting-point is now clear. Religion claims that a Personality exists Who is the supreme reality of the world, in terms of Whose existence and nature we can understand the whole web of life, and the frame in which it is woven, in terms of Whose activity the unity of history is being achieved, Whose reality gives meaning and value to nature and life and consciousness, uniting in one focus both the practical and the theoretical aspects of our experience, unifying the world of fact with the world of value. This may be expressed concisely if we say that the claim that God exists is the claim that the supreme reality is a universal personality.

This conception of a universal personality, like all fundamental conceptions, is not born full-grown in the minds of men. Analysis can show that it is vaguely implied in the most primitive forms of religious experience, but the implications are only gradually disengaged in the course of history. Only little by little do men come to discover what it means to be a person, and universality is only slowly grasped.[1] Though the human

[1] The primitive savage can think of a tree or an animal as his God because he has no clear conception of the essential difference between himself and these objects. He is in that sense much closer to nature. In the same way his gods are tribal and limited, or restricted to particular fields of experience in the exercise of their power. But this is because the idea of interconnection, the idea of a single universe, has not yet been forced into consciousness. Whatever he may single out as his deity, and whatever powers he may ascribe to

race is as yet in its infancy, it is already clear to us that the demand implicit in religion from the first can only be satisfied through an ethical monotheism. Earlier stages of religious development took refuge in the obscurities of polytheism from the patent difficulties of referring the contradictions of the world to a single personality. But these cruder experiments we can safely ignore, and concern ourselves exclusively with a religious experience which insists on monotheism, seeking there the difficulties which beset the effort to establish the reality of God.

The central difficulty is perhaps to unite and hold together the personality and the universality in the religious conception. The cleavage between the priestly conception and the prophetic conception of religion in the Old Testament is a good example of this, and ready to our hand.[1] The priestly type is predominantly practical and ethical. Its effort is to unify all activities under the law which expresses the will of God for man. If this can be done, then in the field of practice the universality that is demanded has been achieved. Life has been brought into subjection to God. This is indeed less than is requisite even in the practical field, since nature as well as human life must be uniformly and together dominated by the one law, a fact which explains

him, he behaves towards him always as he would behave to a person, and ascribes to him the characteristics which he admires or desiderates in persons. The idea of universality is indeed the product of science and philosophy; and here lies part of the ground of contention between science and religion. Science developed the idea of universal law in conflict with the dogmas of the Church, and developed it in the material field. The scientific conception of universality was therefore conceived in mathematical terms, and later in organic terms. The effect of this in maintaining a conflict of concepts between science and religion we have just discussed.

[1] I use the terms 'priestly' and 'prophetic' loosely. There is, of course, no historical justification for any absolute distinction between the 'priest' and the 'prophet'. I hope that the terms used will indicate sufficiently the distinction between legal and living ideas of religion, which is such an outstanding feature of the Old Testament literature.

why the priestly type of religion invariably connects the keeping of the law with material prosperity. Human life perfectly submitted to the will of God could not be out of harmony with a Nature which is the creature of the same divine purpose.

The defect of the priestly type of religion is this. The more it succeeds in its task of subjecting all life to the divine law, the more completely it drives personality from the field, and the less spiritual does it become. This is the brunt of the attack upon it made by the great prophets, by Christ and by Paul. In becoming a practical and detailed law, imposed on men, it becomes external, mechanical and unspiritual. Morality becomes a conformity, conformity to an ever-increasing, all-pervading system of regulation in which the freedom and spontaneity of the personal life is choked. The spirit finds itself in bondage. Three specific indictments of the legal religion may be mentioned. There is first the theme of the book of Job. All empirical justification is lacking for the belief that obedience to the divine law is crowned by material prosperity. A hiatus appears between the law that governs the holy life and the law that governs nature. There is, secondly, the attack of the apostle Paul. The exacting demands of the divine law cannot be realised in the lives of sinful men. Its effect can only be to isolate men from God and so make a life of fellowship with God impossible. Christ's attack on Pharisaism goes deeper than either, to the root of the matter. 'The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath.' In spite of the possibility which it opens up of a universality of divine control, the legal religion is fundamentally unspiritual. It subordinates personality to an external control, and in this implicitly denies the

spiritual life. Under the law life becomes 'play-acting', a sham fight in which acts of duty have ceased to be the expression of spiritual quality. Such a universal control of life by an external authority which, like the modern universality of science, nullifies personality, cannot express the nature of God, for God is personal.

Thus the priestly type of religious development, seeking a short cut to the subordination of all things to God, fails signally. In its religious fervour for universality it sacrifices personality. It ceases to be religion, fails even to be a morality, and becomes merely law, an imposition upon the spiritual life which must destroy it in proportion to the success with which it achieves its object. Such a conception of religion can have no objectivity. Even could human life be successfully subordinated to the law, what proof could there be that this law was in fact what it claimed to be, the absolute expression of the divine will? The only conceivable form of proof would be that which the Stoic philosophers sought, its conformity to the law of nature. But any such appeal could only discover its origins in human tradition, and so convict it of complete subjectivity.

The prophetic type of religious development stands in strong contrast to this. It is a personal religion in two senses. It has its being in the spiritual experience of individual men, rooted in their insight into spiritual qualities and spiritual relations, and its central theme is the nature of the divine personality. On this side the Old Testament tells the story of a steady growth of spiritual insight into the character of God, which rests upon the inner conflicts of a long succession of spiritually minded men. Each prophet stands, as it were, on his own experience, and builds upon it his own conviction

of the character of God. We should remember here that 'personal' experience is not mere 'individual' experience. It is largely the experience of other men, predecessors and contemporaries, built into the structure of a man's own being, fused with himself and cast in an individual mould. This alone makes possible a spiritual development through the generations of a people's history, and creates a community of spiritual belief. In its general character this growing body of prophetic religion is an interpretation of the divine personality in terms of an experience of the human.

The prophetic religion moves undoubtedly upon a much higher plane than the priestly type, surpassing it in its depth of humanity and its grasp of spiritual meaning. Nevertheless it cannot make good its claim to possess an objective knowledge of God. If that was at its best merely ethical, this is only aesthetic, and even about the highest reaches of its conception of God there clings the subjectivity which attaches to all art. It has no standing as of right within the world of hard fact. If we compare the sublime conceptions of God recorded in Isaiah or in Job with the jealous and limited Deity of the earlier records of the Old Testament writings, we feel no hesitation in asserting that the former are immeasurably deeper and more sublime. But are they therefore any the more *true*? More beautiful they are, more satisfying to our spiritual instincts, at least to the instincts of men who are cultivated and kindly. But ought we to rest satisfied with a subjective criterion of truth? Truth is sometimes sordid, and we are apt to be the dupes of heart's desire. 'Instincts' are sometimes only ingrained prejudices. To appeal to our sense of value is a subtle way of taking for true what we should prefer to believe. Sublime and

beautiful conceptions of the nature of reality flatter our human dignity and cover the nakedness of our spiritual need. They comfort our loneliness. They make us at home in our world, and strengthen us in the face of the patent brutalities of fact. They ennoble and transfigure our human struggles. But all this is beside the point. To take this as a measure of truth is to trust an ancient gospel, long convicted of scepticism, that 'Man is the measure of all things'. It is to set up our personality, with its needs, often childish; its desires, often morbid; its values, always shifting and hesitant, as the standard that shall measure reality. We must be honest about this. The sublimest prophetic conception of the character of God is but the art-product of human phantasy, created to meet the need of human souls in the stress of their labour and anguish, born of the Will-to-Believe. It may be true, but only if our instinctive demands are the measure of fact, and if the God of our conception rides the storm of history. But of these things how can we be sure?[1]

[1] In this there is no disparagement of the part played in knowledge by the aesthetic imagination. *All* knowledge is in the first instance 'the art-product of human phantasy', and apart from the creative activity of the imagination no knowledge is possible. But at this stage it remains 'unverified' and therefore subjective. The charge lies against all merely speculative rationalism, whether it be a materialistic realism or a romantic idealism. To reach objectivity this aesthetic basis of belief must be submitted without bias or prejudice to the criticism of practical experiment. The long development of the religious conceptions of the Hebrews was, as has been argued in Essay IV., above, absolutely essential to the production of an objective and universal religion. Christianity is in large measure the progressive verification of the hypotheses regarding the character of God which the Hebrew prophets gradually developed. Similarly, many of the speculations of Greek physical philosophy have been shown by modern science to be well-grounded. Nevertheless, Greek speculation was not scientific even where the marvellous intuition of the Greek thinkers led them to true conclusions. When science was ultimately created by the development of the experimental method, all such theories had to be rediscovered in a new way. Many of the regulations of the Old Testament law regarding food and hygiene are astonishingly in accord with modern medical science, yet it is only as a result of medical research that we are warranted in concluding them to be objectively valid, or enabled to distinguish those which are scientifically sound from those that are merely superstitious.

In this very uncertainty we can discover the two conditions which the prophetic type of religion cannot fulfil. Two gulfs appear that are beyond its power to span, and that cut it off from objectivity. There is a gulf between the personality of the prophet and the personality of his God. There is another between his conception of the character of God and the hard brutalities of natural experience which are to find their meaning and their origin in Him. The first reveals itself in the prophet's sense of unworthiness. He is judged by his own ideal. In face of his own thought of perfect personality, he is sensible of personal failure. In condemning its author, his vision of God destroys the very source of its authority. We recognise it as an aesthetic, not a scientific product. Its authority lies in its power to satisfy the hearts of men, and in condemning them it reveals their incapacity to estimate its worth. In fact, however, no single prophetic conception will satisfy the spiritual instincts of all men, nor will two prophets give us the same vision of God; and truth is one for all. These are but two of the main characters of all art. Its appeal depends both on the depth of the artist's insight and upon the sensitiveness and the experience of those who welcome or reject it. From this arise in the wide field of art the common difficulties that render any final valuation of a work of art impossible. How much more must we expect to meet them in the field of religion, which is more than art, and must claim to be true as well as to be sublime. So long as the gap between the prophet's conception of the divine nature and his knowledge of his own remains unfilled, so long religious belief must remain prisoned in subjectivity. A conception of perfect personality which springs from the experience of imperfect personality and appeals in

turn to the value-judgements of imperfect personality, is a hypothesis which does not admit of verification. It must fall back, like its rival, upon the reiterated assertion of its origin in a divine revelation, an assertion which it tries in vain to vindicate. The prophet's 'Thus saith the Lord' is evidence at once of his need to appeal beyond himself for the authority of his vision, and of his inability to make good the claim, for such a claim could only have an objective standing if it were both made and judged by perfect personality.

Even could this condition be fulfilled, the result would not suffice. It would secure a final aesthetic judgement upon the conception of the nature of God, but would not vindicate its objectivity. The claim that the supreme reality is a universal personality would still be unsubstantiated. For the gulf between the ideal conception of God and the positive facts of nature and history remains unbridged. Maintaining the personality in God that religion demands, the prophetic religion loses its grip on universality. The more spiritual its conception of God becomes, the more it deepens to answer the cravings of a deepening human experience of life, the more luridly does the chasm that separates God from man and God from nature stand out. Is it not this very contrast, this very consciousness of human failure, this refusal of nature to submit to the yoke of spiritual purpose which works to deepen the content of the prophetic message? The cleavage between the actual and the ideal becomes more and more manifest, till men must ask themselves whether a God of love can indeed be the cause and meaning of such a world as this, and how human feebleness can ever escape the dire necessity of a bondage of law to curb the evil of its nature. The opposition between the Law and the

Prophets grows ever more radical. As the law increases its strangle-hold upon the actualities of daily life, losing touch the while with the world of the spirit, so the ideal world withdraws more and more from contact with the actual, and in its growing sublimity grows ever more remote. The prophetic vision loses its footing in history, and from its own aesthetic resources generates the picture of another world, confessedly remote from the sphere of our sorrow, 'a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness'. Even in this last phase the need of religion for a footing in history expresses itself by projecting its ideal into the real though distant future.

### Hypothesis of an Incarnation

The conclusion may seem dismal, yet from the dinginess of the setting shines out the jewel of our search. The conditions of success are clear. The two gulfs must be bridged. The discrepancy between the prophet's personality and his conception of God must disappear, and at the same time the conception of God must recapture its footing in history and show itself able to unify and explain the world of fact. That is the need. How can it be met?

It can be met by the hypothesis of an incarnation, and so far as I can see in no other way. If God becomes incarnate in a human personality, both gulfs are bridged, and religion becomes objective at once. Here we should have a real person—no longer the idea of a person—rooted in the actuality of history, who would not merely create, but embody a conception of God, and in whom, therefore, the distance that separates the prophet's personality from his vision would have disappeared. If we are to substantiate the claim inherent in religion

that the supreme reality is God, our first step must be to discover a human and historical person, in whom the conception which he forms of God through his own human experience is accompanied by no sense of spiritual distance from God. We must accept the hypothesis that this man embodies in his human personality the personality of God. We must then proceed to test this hypothesis experimentally and patiently in terms of its capacity to give meaning and unity, both in the sphere of knowledge and in the sphere of practice, to life and the stage on which life moves. When we have rooted the conception of God in the world of fact through our hypothesis of an incarnation, we can verify it in terms of universality.

It would be tempting to take leave of the argument at this point with the bare assertion that of all known religions Christianity alone, through its doctrine of the incarnation of God in the personality of Jesus of Nazareth, fulfils the root condition of religious objectivity. But it would not be fair. If this be true, as I am convinced that it is, it is also true that Christianity has not realised clearly the implications of its doctrine, and has not exploited its unique advantage. Instead, it has consistently, in its orthodox moods, insisted upon a dogma, not a hypothesis, of incarnation, which has been considerably challenged even within the church, and it has for the most part appealed to subjective experience as the authority for its doctrine. We must carry the argument further, if only to elucidate the meaning of our hypothesis. We must deal with two large questions, whether the knowledge which we have of the historic personality of Jesus justifies us in framing the hypothesis that He was the bearer of divine personality, and if so, how the hypothesis can in practice be put to the test.

### Conditions of the Hypothesis

In any discussion of the legitimacy of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, *as a hypothesis*, the issue centres upon the *human* character of Christ's personality. The hypothesis is legitimate if there is reasonable ground for believing that His conception of God, sublime as it was, did not produce in Jesus any sense of moral failure. That this is so should, I think, be admitted. Though clearly the climax of the long line of Hebrew prophets, insisting, like them, but with incomparably greater insight and artistry, upon the necessity of a spiritual conception of God and of life, the absence of any sense of distance between Himself and God is a very remarkable feature of the mind of Jesus. We will, if you please, disregard all evidence of positive claims on His part to a unique relationship with God as suspect because possibly spurious, although the concession, to my mind, borders on the ludicrous. There remains the much more impressive negative evidence. It consists in Christ's habit of fusing constantly in His teaching His conception of the character of God with the nature of His own life and work. The prophetic formula, 'Thus saith the Lord', is replaced by an assumption of personal authority in the words, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you'. The change in the formula must surely be conscious and intentional. He constantly appeals to the character of His own life and activity to substantiate the authority that He claims. He has an unshakable faith in His ability to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. He pushes His own personality into the foreground, saying 'Follow me'. Though the positive formulation of this attitude of mind is more characteristic of the gospel of John, the

attitude itself is quite as evident, though less obtrusive, in the synoptic gospels. Two quotations will serve to illustrate this. 'Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name,' said Jesus (the record is Mark's), 'receiveth me, and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent me.' There is a well-known passage in Matthew where He says, 'All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' These passages embody an attitude which pervades the records of the gospels, and they reveal a conception of His own work and personality which is surely inconsistent with any sense of moral unworthiness in Himself.

It is untrue to hold that these facts prove the Divinity of Christ, or the doctrine of the Incarnation. What they secure is the reasonableness and legitimacy of the hypothesis. To suggest that a person who made no profound appeal to our sense of spiritual values, subjective and unreliable though it be, might bear the personality of God, would be entirely gratuitous. On the other hand, it would be self-contradictory to select a great spiritual genius for the purpose on the strength of His appeal to our spiritual instincts, if His own sense of personal unworthiness rejected the hypothesis. But given a human person whose spiritual grandeur appeals to our subjective sense of the divine, and whose own consciousness does not refuse to tolerate the suggestion of a spiritual unity with God which we make, then the hypothesis that He is the incarnation of the divine personality is so far scientifically reasonable and

legitimate. Make the hypothesis, treat it scientifically, and all our religious experience is at once objectified. It escapes from the prison-house of a merely aesthetic valuation, in which the chance of truth depends on the spiritual intuition of individual persons at a particular stage of human development. It enters the communal world of historical investigation, of scientific and philosophical discussion, of deliberate and experimental verification. Even if it has gained no more than the status of a working hypothesis it suffices to secure objectivity. A rational investigation of its claims is now possible, because it roots the idea of God in a fact of history, which may or may not prove adequate to the burden put upon it, but which can at least be handled empirically.

### Verification of the Hypothesis

Our last task is to indicate the method by which such a hypothesis can be tested. A complete investigation of this question would fill many volumes, even if it were within the compass of any single mind to exhaust it. Happily this is not necessary. To propound a scientific hypothesis is not to be saddled with the duty of expounding in detail the experiments and methods of investigation which may be necessary to establish its validity. Perhaps, indeed, no fundamental hypothesis admits of final and formal proof. Its implications must be patiently and gradually elucidated, its statement many times reshaped, new methods of its application and new tests of its validity invented and utilised for many generations. But it is reasonable to demand some indication that it is susceptible of investigation by some recognised method, that there is reasonable ground for supposing, in the light of all relevant knowledge, that

it may be true, and that no other hypothesis in the field satisfies more fully the conditions of the problem.

This last point we have already disposed of. We have seen that the only possible hypothesis is the hypothesis of an incarnation. Any alternative to the Christian hypothesis must produce a historic personality that fulfils the conditions we have already laid down at least as well as the personality of Jesus. In particular, his own consciousness must not directly or indirectly reject the hypothesis. We may safely say that there are no rivals in the field, at least none for whom a *prima facie* case of spiritual superiority can be made out. We may therefore turn our attention to the other considerations, and, since they have mutual implications, treat them together.

The claim that Jesus of Nazareth is the incarnation of the divine personality, is in fact, as we have already discovered, a claim that the human personality of Jesus is universal. It implies that all life and all nature can be understood in the light of His personality; that in terms of Him the practical problems of the unification of the world's activity can be completely achieved; indeed that the kind of personality Jesus was stands behind the whole unitary process of reality. This is what has to be tested. It must be shown that the various aspects of the spiritual activity of men, in art and science, in metaphysics and morality, in social organisation and political development, as well as in religion, are held, as it were, in solution in the personality of Jesus, and find their spiritual unity in his attitude to life. Is this a reasonable suggestion to make? Can we believe it possible that this one personality is the focus of the spiritual life of the human race? This is not to ask, 'Was Jesus a greater artist than Michael

Angelo or Homer, or a greater scientist than Newton or Faraday?' Such an interpretation rests upon a false and narrow view of the nature of personality. The *de facto* achievements of a great man are not confined to the works of his own hands. The greatest personalities, such as Gautama Buddha or Socrates, achieve themselves in and through other men. The impact of Plato's mind is still winning its personal triumph even beyond the confines of Europe. The sense in which the vast claim for the personality of Jesus has to be verified in this field is perfectly expressed in the words of Paul, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'. The phrase is to be taken literally for our purpose. Does the empirical evidence show, or does it not, that the impact of the personality of Christ upon human society creates or releases a spiritual fertility in all departments of life, which raises the achievements of the human spirit in all spheres to higher and higher levels? This is the proper question at issue, and it contains one subsidiary problem of the first importance. Does the impact of Christ's personality tend towards the *unification* of the spiritual life, the gathering into one force of the disunions of art and science, philosophy and practice, individual and social activities, towards the mitigation of one-sidedness and prejudice, towards balance and sanity?

In the more strictly historical field similar questions present themselves as corollaries of the hypothesis. The personality of Jesus must be taken as the focus of human history. Does it vivify and gather into unity the earlier stretches of the history of the race? Can Christ be regarded as the climax of its evolution? Can He dominate the future? Does the impact of His personality upon Europe account for the fact and the

character of its development to the present day ? Can we trace back to the work of Jesus the gradual civilisation and unification of Europe, the creation of modern science, the development of democratic institutions and the other great movements of the Christian era ? Was the spirit of Jesus the solvent which enabled Christendom to melt into one living civilisation the one-sided achievements of Greece and of Rome ? All these questions, though not all with equal ease, are amenable to the established methods of historical science.

We must mention also a third set of questions, which are both pertinent and peculiarly baffling. The claim for the universality of the personality of Christ demands that it should provide the clue to the conflict between the spiritual world and the material. Does Jesus interpret nature as well as humanity, focussing them both so that they blend into a unity of meaning ? Can His attitude to life make spiritual values consistent with our scientific knowledge of the material world ?

We are not called upon to answer these questions, but only to decide upon their reasonableness. All of them are susceptible of unprejudiced and scientific investigation, since all are questions of fact. Taken together they form the general question whether a complete description of the world as we know it is possible in which the personality of Jesus forms the single and sufficient centre of reference. But science rightly refuses to busy herself with a hypothesis which has not a certain inherent reasonableness in it, and we must submit to this test. There is, however, no occasion for elaborate argument, and I have only a few observations left to advance. There are two considerations which make it reasonable to suppose that the various activities of the human spirit are all focussed in the personality

of Jesus. One is the testimony of workers in various fields to the effects of the influence of Jesus upon their work. The other is the observable effects of great religious movements within Christianity upon progress in other spheres of activity, from art and science to politics and social organisation. Similarly, in the case of the historical questions, the answer is equally favourable. There is an *a priori* likelihood about an attempt to correlate the rise and progress of historic movements in European history with the religious discovery or rediscovery of some aspect of the personality of Jesus. Were one asked to select the most important influence in the life of Europe since the decline of the Roman Empire, one would hardly be unreasonable in singling out the influence of the Christian Church. As Professor Vaughan remarks, 'As a civilising and purifying influence, as a power which works not only for personal righteousness but also for civic justice, it would be hard, even when all abatements have been made, to overestimate the debt which the world owes to Christianity. And the longer the time that passes, the more completely the spirit is liberated from the dead hand of the letter, the greater assuredly does that debt become.'[1] This considered judgement of an eminent philosopher is sufficient for our present purpose. The hypothesis must further be examined in its reference to pre-Christian history. We are familiar with the theologian's treatment of the history of the Hebrews as a *praeparatio evangelica*.[2] The method is in constant use by the secular historian, whose business it often is to trace the events which led up to and found their significance in the critical achievements of some historic personage. Is it un-

[1] C. E. Vaughan, *Studies in the History of Political Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 8.
[2] Cf. Essay IV. above, *passim*.

reasonable to suggest that a wider view of history as a whole, working with a truer and more developed conception of personality and its place in the historical pageant, may discover that the life of Jesus is the clue to the significance of all the movements of historic civilisations prior to the impact of His personality upon them? The achievements of Greek and of Roman civilisation would have only an antiquarian interest for us were it not for the fact that they were fused and taken up into the living tissue of a Christian civilisation. Ancient civilisations like that of China or of India solidified early into a monotonous and unprogressive formalism until in our own days the influence of Christendom reached them, and they began to absorb ideas and ideals which are the essential product of Christian thought.[1] And sociologists, groping in the dark thickets of primitive forms of social organisation, seem to descry, beneath the bewildering variety of racial and cultural experiments, suggestions of a common line of evolutionary development, which leads by logical stages to the progressive democracies of modern Europe and America, forms of social organisation which have only been historically realised where the influence of Jesus has penetrated. In this field also, it seems to me, it is only a misunderstanding of the issues involved or a narrowness of outlook which could declare the hypothesis to be absurd *a priori*.

When we turn to face the last set of problems, which deal with the reconciliation of nature and spirit, we are in a very perplexing field. The grounds for a

[1] I refer primarily to objective and practical achievement. Subjective achievement, in art and in philosophy, stands upon a different footing. We must distinguish between *evolution* and *progress*. The former is organic and unconscious, the latter conscious and deliberate. Evolution will determine a development of human society up to a point. Beyond this only deliberate progress will carry us. The collapse of Greek civilisation illustrates this.

decision on the reasonableness of the hypothesis are more obscure and more slender. But at least other hypotheses in this field are in no better case. The apparent divergence of spiritual and natural evolution, the seeming disregard of nature for spiritual aims and values, has vexed the philosophies at all times, and no satisfactory solution, least of all a materialistic solution, has appeared. Yet there is fair evidence to show that at least the influence of Jesus, more than any other, has enabled men to grapple with the practical consequences of this dilemma with sincerity and confidence, to advance to the subjugation of nature not without success, and to triumph over the distresses of the conflict up to a point where they can glory in tribulation. It is not unworthy of notice that only in Christian surroundings has there appeared that passionate love of nature which is united with and is indeed a constituent element in the highly developed spirituality of the Romantic movement.

### Alternatives to the Hypothesis

None of these observations are in any sense proofs of the validity of the hypothesis of the incarnation of God in Christ, nor are they offered as such. But they are evidences of the reasonableness of the hypothesis, and suggest that there are grounds for entertaining the idea that it may turn out to be true. With this, our study comes naturally to a close. There is, however, one further consideration which I should like to urge. This hypothesis stands in a unique position. As far as I know, there is no other claimant to divine honour who meets the stringent conditions of the case. If this is so, the alternatives which remain on the rejection of the hypothesis are limited to two. One is the com-

plete rejection of religion and the other its acceptance as a subjective experience with a value of its own for life.[1] On the first alternative religion is a mere mistake, a primitive dream-world of anthropomorphisms, an illusion of human self-centredness, which the advance of objective knowledge is slowly but surely shattering. This view has a wide, though a diminishing, acceptance. Recent developments in science have tended to lessen the confidence of the adherents of materialism. All the attempts, and they have been many and laborious, to account for reality in terms other than personal have been baffled at the threshold of human experience. Human personality defies successfully all efforts to reduce it to sub-personal terms. The development of philosophy in the nineteenth century seems to make it lucidly certain that personality is of a higher logical order than either matter or life, and cannot therefore be accounted for in terms of mechanical physics or evolutionary biology.

The second alternative is to abandon the objectivity of religion, and to give it an independent place in the complex life of the spirit. Such a view will seek to find room for a belief in the existence of God resting upon the 'faith' or intuitive conviction of the individual. It will carve out of the wealth of experience a domain in which the religious instinct can wander without molestation and find its own peculiar satisfaction. It will insist that this instinct is as honourably rooted in human nature as the scientific or any other, and has an equal claim to respect. Religion will become inward

[1] Again I would warn the reader against too narrow an interpretation. 'Subjective' is not a synonym for 'false' or 'valueless'. I reject this second alternative not because it contravenes but because it falls short of the position for which I am pleading. We must live by our convictions, whether we can prove them valid or not: but we must not offer our sense of conviction as proof of the objective validity of our beliefs.

and intuitive, admitting of no scientific proofs and needing none, but standing on its own broad base as a distinctive human experience, and contributing to personality, as art does, an insight and a wisdom of its own. It will be an independent function of the spirit, with its own freedoms and its own demands, enriching and ennobling personality, necessary to the health and sanity of the human mind.

This attitude to religion is very widespread even in theological circles, very attractive in itself, and very specious. Nevertheless it is a fool's paradise in which we seek to escape from the dangers of fact by closing our eyes. It lacks the courage of its own conviction, and loves the twilight of a dream-world more than the clear certainties of noon. No department of personality can ever be independent, or shut itself up in its own room. Religion cannot be made a departmental aesthetic experience merely. It must claim to be true, and there can be only one truth. It claims that the supreme and only absolute reality of the universe is a personal God, and it must condemn as false any interpretation of the world which either explicitly or implicitly disputes its own. Speaking the language of personality, it cannot limit its appeal to any single aspect of personality. Since its God is the universal meaning of all that exists, the universal power in all that acts, it must claim for the knowledge of God complete control of all theory and of all practice. It must enlarge itself until it can unify all the aspects of personality, and in one bundle with them the whole world in which personality has its being. It cannot abate its universal claim without denying itself. There is no room for art and science and morality side by side with religion. It must be the unity of these or nothing. It cannot root

itself merely in the instincts of individuals, for it could then claim no jurisdiction where the religious instinct was warped or lacking. It cannot be content to be a life of sentiment, since it must claim the unitary control of all practice. Religion must compass objectivity and the universality which is the hall-mark of objectivity, or cease to be religion. It must rid itself of the silly fears of anthropomorphism which have driven it to take sanctuary in the monastery of art,[1] and come out into the open market-place with its courage in both hands. Better an anthropomorphic view of reality than a hylomorphic [2] or even a biomorphic one.

To such conclusions the wind of the argument has carried us. It impels us to the acceptance of a hypothesis, not a dogma: that if we are to make religion real we must assume an incarnation of God in a human personality; and since no other fulfils the conditions so well we must assume the incarnation of God in Christ. Religion becomes for us the life of faith, the ceaseless, infinite testing of our hypothesis in all the fields of human activity. For our hypothesis is too big for any final proof. In testing it we but create more experience to test. We can never escape from the need to trust our instinct and our intuition, unreliable though they may be. Even the physicist must do that. We must trust an unproved hypothesis if we are ever to gather the material for its testing. This is our call to faith, to an adventure which by the continuity of a saecular experiment is ever strengthening its claim to truth. For a faith that glories in its subjectivity glories in its shame. It is a cowardice and an egoism.

[1] With the argument in Essay IV., above, that in certain important respects religion is more akin to art than to science, I am in complete agreement. I am here concerned to insist, also in agreement with its author, that in certain other respects it is more akin to science than to art. [2] Greek ὕλη: matter.

# VI

# MYTH AND REALITY

BY

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# MYTH AND REALITY

## SYNOPSIS

### Religion

Religion offers a challenge to personality.

Personality has two aspects, a universal and an individual.

Knowledge the activity of personality, *i.e.* an assimilation by the personality of what lies outside.

### Muthos

Religion presents its appeal to personality under the form of a μῦθος. Imaginative value of this.

The historical element in the Christian muthos enhances its value.

### Mediator

The central idea in the Christian muthos is the mediation of Christ between man and God.

The need of a mediator is felt in every religion. Two types in ancient religion.

(1) The sacerdotal mediator, human but approximating at its highest to the second type.

(2) The spiritual mediator, sharing in divine nature. Development of this conception in first and second centuries A.D. The Christian conception is primarily of a spiritual Mediator, but includes while transcending the sacerdotal mediator, as we see in Epistle to the Hebrews.

### Nature of Mediator

In considering the mediatorial nature and functions of Christ, we find that:

(1) A Revelation of God to human minds in terms of human personality is the only one possible.

(2) A Revelation of human life at its highest is expressed in all its fullness in Christ. Christian thought has hitherto tended to emphasise one aspect at expense of the other.

Over-emphasis on the human aspect leads to:

(1) An overshadowing of the promise and hope of the Resurrection.

(2) The limitation of spiritual life which arises from this.

Over-emphasis on the divine aspect leads to :

(1) A need being felt for other mediators. (2) An emptying of Christ's *human* experience of its value for us.

The question, Could Christ have sinned ? Men will not be helped unless they feel that an approximation to the perfect life lies within their reach.

Necessity of seeing the historic experience and the eternal reality of Jesus Christ as two sides of the same Person. It is just this two-sided reality which the muthos expresses to us.

### Process of Mediation

The characteristic of myth, as distinct from historical record, is to present eternal law symbolised in particular fact.

Thus *The Incarnation* reveals the law of the Word for ever becoming flesh. This is expressed in doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The significance of this for us.

Does this view detract from the uniqueness of Christ ?

*The Atonement.* The traditional view, though generally rejected as immoral and meaningless at the present day, exercises a strong emotional appeal ; and, where accepted, leads to a view of life in the body as a punishment—which also tends to be rejected nowadays.

We can perhaps understand the Atonement as Christ sharing the guilt of all the human race, redeeming it through suffering. We also are invited to share in that work of atonement. A light is thrown by this on the problem of pain.

*The Resurrection and Ascension.* The endless work of Christ goes on through Intercession. The prayer and mediation of Christ. Our share in the Risen Life.

### Conclusion

Mankind shares in and supplements the mediatory functions of Christ. The challenge involved in this.

# VI

## MYTH AND REALITY

THE history of religion is the history of beliefs working out in action and in life, of a clamant experience shaping belief. For religion is a belief lived, that is to say, a belief taken up and absorbed by personality, so that it determines the whole orientation of the spiritual life. The whole field of personality is its domain, including thought and action as being the expression of personality. Religion offers a key to the understanding and ultimate purpose of reality, and its fundamental assumption is that understanding means identification with that purpose, so that recognition and active fulfilment in the world are one.[1]

It is the aim of this essay to examine the significance of Christian belief as a challenge to the personality. Personality involves two elements, the universal and the individual. Its supreme activity is that of comprehending and unifying within itself the world which lies outside. To this activity there are potentially no limits except those which it sets for itself; the whole of life, the whole activity of man, the whole of reality waits to be embraced and included within its cognisance. And by being

[1] We may compare with this Plato's view of philosophy as expressed in the Seventh Epistle: 'There does not exist and never shall any treatise by myself on these matters. The subject does not admit, as the sciences in general do, of exposition. It is only after long association in the great business itself and a shared life that a light breaks out in the soul, kindled so to say by a leaping flame, and thereafter feeds itself.'

brought within the focus of a single mind reality is unified: so that we may ascribe to personality a character both universal and individual—in scope it is universal but in activity never loses its character of oneness. Again, by 'knowing' a thing or a person, as we say, we make it part of ourselves. For knowledge, as Plato saw, is experience, or rather an experiencing, so that knower and known are unified; and therefore it is necessary to distinguish here between the acquiescence in the representation of reality which scientific 'knowledge' implies, and this vital activity of spirit which I have called experience. For all the measurement, tabulation and classification which science gives are nothing but a shorthand expression and summation of experience, suggestive to one who has already experienced, but meaningless to the ignorant. I would submit that the artist who loves the rose knows it, but the botanist may or may not—though the botanist may well enrich the knowledge of the artist. This analysis of the activity of personality holds good, and is even more important, when we consider the interchange of sympathy and understanding which takes place between two persons. Each is including the other within his own consciousness, and without this there can be no communion between them. So that converse or communion means, not the tossing of a ball between one mind and another, but the interpenetration of spirits. This is suggestive for the understanding of prayer, and we shall return to it hereafter.

It is to this unit, potentially all-embracing in the way of knowledge, fulfilling its knowledge in the way of action, that religion offers its revelation and its challenge. And for the most part, recognising the wholeness and immediacy of personal experience, it presents its interpretation of reality under the form of a μῦθος, that is,

we are shown eternal and universal truth concretely realised in a series of acts taking place in the world as we know it. Such a presentation is basic and dynamic; the mind is left free to pursue its own channels of rationalisation and work out its own scientific dogmas, while the imagination is compelled to dwell upon the picture and provoked to new creation. Plato recognised the value of this method of presentation and the need to supplement intellectual argument, as we see from the myths which close so many of his dialogues—a witness to the necessity of illustrating for human minds universal truth in concrete fact. Similarly for the understanding of Christianity, we are pointed to a story—the birth in human form, the life and death and resurrection, of Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the Christian religion.

An unique value is given to this muthos by the conception of its historicity. In it we are shown the eternal God taking upon Him our nature in time—'God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world: perfect God and perfect Man.' Thus the Incarnation, the central fact of the muthos, is rooted in the reality which we know, and we feel that our conception of God is justified by objective fact—the fact, I mean, that such a man as Jesus really lived and died upon the cross. The value of this historic element in the muthos is sometimes questioned by abstract thinkers. They maintain that, as it is the function of a myth to express in concrete form eternal truth, its historicity is immaterial. The whole value, they urge, of any so-called 'fact' lies in the truth which it expresses; in itself it is nothing, a mere form without content. Whether it 'happened' or not, it is 'true' in virtue of the truth which it expresses. It derives value, not from

its incidence in space and time, but from the significance of the eternal truth which it symbolises. So, then, it does not matter whether Christ walked in Galilee two thousand years ago or not—that is, it does not affect the truth of Christianity. We feel immediately in considering this view that it is repugnant to common sense. The plain man will need to have his habitual atmosphere of thought purified by several degrees before he can accept such a view with equanimity. And surely Christianity was meant for the plain man. If we are to conceive of the process as 'true', it must have taken place under terms which answer to those of our own experience. It may be argued that our highest moments of experience are neither temporal nor spatial, but it would be idle to deny that the whole of our conscious life is set in the framework of time and space; and while we do not claim that this is final—nay rather it challenges us to the thought of infinitudes beyond—we do more readily admit the stamp of reality on that which is presented to us under these terms. Because of the modes of thought through which we perceive truth, it is just the historicity in the myth which to us guarantees its reality.

Religion, then, presents its claim to the interpretation of reality under the form of a myth. Christianity further claims for its myth truth of objective fact. It illustrates the fundamental assertion of religion, that all reality is the expression of God, by maintaining that once God was perfectly expressed in terms of human personality in Christ.

That this should be the central fact of the Christian muthos reveals a further need of the religious consciousness—the need for a mediator, one who will stand between God and man effecting union and atonement.

The Christian religion was not the first to recognise and meet this need: we find it in all religions. And in all the function of the mediator is twofold—first, to approach God in the name of His worshippers and present their needs, and, secondly, to interpret to them the divine will. Now for this he will need special qualifications, and these qualifications differ according to the relation which is conceived to exist between God and His worshippers. In a ceremonial and formal type of religion, where approach to God depends rather upon the due performance of ritual than upon any attitude of mind, the mediator requires, first, a specialised knowledge, and, secondly, such preparation and ceremonial purity of life as his particular religion may enjoin. But in *nature* he does not differ from those whom he claims to represent. In this type of religion (the religion of Roman paganism will serve as an instance) the ceremonial of approach is elaborate, the formulae of invocation are frequently obscure and perhaps expressed in a forgotten tongue, and the whole technique of worship belongs to a world apart and claims for its ministrants a specialised service—the due and exact observance at set times and special seasons of a 'use' minutely framed and reaching far back into the past. Dedication, therefore, is required of him, and special purification of life, that he may be enabled to perform his sacerdotal functions, unembarrassed by the claims which beset the ordinary man in his avocations. Hence we find in religions of this type various taboos, as to eating and drinking and sex, laid upon the priest. So far he stands above the company of worshippers whom he interprets and to whom he ministers; yet it is as a man, howbeit a man set apart and trained and purified, that he claims to interpret the god's will.

In this sacerdotal conception of the mediator we find another and more spiritual type shadowed forth, according as the emphasis upon purity of life, a purity which sets him apart from the ordinary man, deepens and increases, and according as he shows a fuller understanding of the purposes of God. Yet there remains a fundamental distinction between this type of mediator and the type which we see embodied at its fullest in Christ, where the dual function of presenting and interpreting as between man and God is performed in virtue of a *dual nature*, human and divine.

It may be fruitful here to trace the emergence of this conception as it appears in the thought of the first and second centuries A.D. In this period we may observe in the writings of Plutarch, Apuleius and others, the beginnings of a movement which culminated two centuries later in Neoplatonism; wherein Greek thought moved away from the self-sufficient intellectualism of philosophy, tried for a time, but found too hard, the ego-centric ethic of the Stoics, and finally began to grope helplessly 'in worlds not realised' of religion, where man is as a speck of dust before his creator. That is to say that, turning to the contemplation of one God (the demiurge of Plato), men developed the conception of His 'goodness', immeasurably enriching and spiritualising it; and at the same time, as the result of looking to that perfection, became increasingly conscious of their own sin and unworthiness. And the result of this deepening of the religious consciousness was to sharpen their sense of longing for union with the divine, apparently severed from them now by so pitiless and widening a gulf. Some might conceive in an inspired moment of a God whose perfection brought Him nearer, as Seneca did when he wrote, 'Non sunt di fastidiosi, non invidi:

admittunt et ascendentibus manum porrigunt', but in the normal line of development we see God receding into a heaven of light, while man is plunged ever deeper in the sense of his own sin.

The natural outcome of this sharp sense of separation is the conception of one or more mediators to bridge the gulf, but mediators conceived on a different plan, for here we have no traditional forms of access, only the cry of the heart and a God too remote in His perfection to hear. There must be mediators, then, free from that despair which besets all the human race, yet able to present their needs to God, such, too, as will not, in the conception of this age, contaminate the divine purity by their approach to Him, and such as may spare Him from direct contact with the world by carrying out His mandates. Out of such a welter of true religious feeling, blind despair, superstition and false metaphysic emerged the conception of innumerable daemons, half-human, half-divine, peopling the world with their hierarchies and performing every function between God and man in virtue of their dual nature.[1] By the time of Plotinus, the Deity himself has been evolved into a trinity of which the highest member is exempt, not only from all contact with matter, but even from all quality and all

[1] See, for instance, Plutarch, *De Defectu*, 414 E, 415, c. ix. x.: 'He who mixes up the god with mortal needs does not spare his majesty nor preserve the dignity and greatness of his excellence.'. . . It seems to me that those who have inserted the class of daemons between gods and men, to draw and knit together the fellowship of the two orders after a fashion, have cleared away more perplexities and greater.'

*De Iside*, c. xxvi.: 'Plato calls such a kind interpreters and ministers, being between gods and men, seeing that they convey to heaven the needs and prayers of men, and bring from heaven to earth oracles and blessings.'

See also Apuleius, *De Deo Socratis*, *passim*, *e.g.* c. iv.: 'Nullus Deus miscetur hominibus', and vi. 'Sunt quaedam divinae mediae potestates', etc. Both Plutarch and Apuleius and other writers of this type quote Plato as their authority for this belief, especially the *Symposium*, 202 *d*, *e*. In the Plutarchian hierarchy men may pass into heroes, heroes into daemons, daemons into gods, *e.g.* *De Defectu*, x. 415 *b*; *De Iside*, xxvii.

positive activity of thought; while it is the lowest member only, ψυχή, that evolves itself in life in the world, and brings the divine into touch with man.

In Christianity we see the same sense of a gulf between the perfection of God and the sinfulness of man, the same clamant need to bridge it, and in the Christian muthos the same refuge taken in a nature participating both in the divine life and in the human, which effects union and at-onement. Only in the Christian muthos reconciliation is centred in a single figure—who gains immeasurably thereby in value. Of this type of mediator, as of the sacerdotal, we may say that he claims to present to God the needs of His worshippers and to interpret to them God's will; but his participation in the divine nature gives him fuller knowledge and authority to speak. The priestly mediator reconciles in virtue of his office and performance, of what he *does*; the spiritual in virtue of his nature, of what he *is*.

But while in Christian thought the richer and more spiritual conception of mediatorship is dominant, we find fused with this the sacerdotal conception too. This is worked out most fully in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the writer begins by applying to Christ in a symbolic sense the first type of priesthood, and then spiritualises the conception of his office until it becomes in reality a divine and spiritual intercession. Christ is 'our Great High Priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God'. Because he is man and has shared our sufferings he is entitled to approach God and bring Him offering in our name: because he is God's son his offering is acceptable and 'He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified'. His human experience correlates with the special type of knowledge required of the earthly priest: it is in virtue of this

that he can approach God in the name of Man, and his divine and eternal nature endows him with authority to declare God's purposes. Thus the two conceptions are merged in one, and in their unification transcended.

This is the cardinal truth expressed in the Christian muthos: it presents Christ as Mediator in virtue of his full and complete participation in two natures, human and divine. Round this dual nature, and round his functions as reconciler, a rich vesture of thought has been woven by the ages. The old question, 'What think ye of Christ?' still challenges an answer, and according to the answers which men have given, so has their religion been coloured and the whole direction of their spiritual life determined. In investigating, therefore, the significance of the Christian muthos, we have, first of all, to consider the revelation which it offers of God's nature and of man's, and, secondly, how the process of reconciliation is effected, and what is the meaning of the muthos here. These are fundamental questions, and my purpose in raising them is not so much to give a new answer, as to examine the traditional solutions from a slightly different point of view. For my whole thesis is that an answer—if by that we mean some positive and final solution—is not to be looked for, only a progressive understanding to which this or that interpretation gives a direction of greater or less value.

In Christ we are given the fullest and most complete revelation of the nature of God which is possible. In fact we could never have known God unless He had been presented to us in terms of human personality. For ultimately personality is not only the highest category of being of which we are cognisant, but it is also the only thing which we can know in the fullest sense of the term. Our knowledge of infra-personal

existence is only gained through our own personal experience, while it is obvious that, if God is supra-personal, He is thereby set beyond our cognisance. Therefore, to apprehend Him, He must be brought within the scope of our human experience, and this is most fully and completely done by enabling personality to embrace personality, by enabling us to know God under the highest terms of which our nature makes us capable. This is precisely what is offered by the doctrine of the Incarnation. But the Incarnation also offers us a revelation of the possibilities of human life, for we are taught that Christ was ' perfect man '.

Christian thought has always shown a tendency to emphasise one side of this revelation at the expense of the other, to the impoverishment in either case of the spiritual significance of the Incarnation. One type of thought emphasises chiefly the historic life of Christ, his works and sayings, suffering and death—the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels, in all things like as we are. This life is held up as an example, given to us once in space and time, of what our lives should be. The eternal and divine nature of Christ does indeed form a background to the conception, but it is implicit rather than expressed. Now the natural and necessary result of looking to a past event rather than to a living present reality is twofold. It leads, in the first place, to an overshadowing of the cardinal meaning of the Resurrection, which is limited to giving us a guarantee of our own future existence. The crucifixion of the perfect man becomes the central fact of the muthos, and, as a result, the need for sacrifice and self-denial the central doctrine. The Christian is pointed to the Cross less as a sign of deliverance than as a symbol of the ideal of life.

We may say of this type of thought that it stops short at the Cross. This is a serious curtailment of the Christian muthos and its teaching, and there arises from it in practice a limiting of the spiritual life. The Christian is given a pattern of life and a number of ethical precepts which inculcate self-control and sacrifice; but these are ultimately insufficient if he is to realise all his possibilities of life and power. No one would deny that the teaching of the Cross is at the heart of the Christian religion, but it is belief in the Resurrection and the Ascension in all the fullness of their spiritual significance—which need not mean their acceptance as physical events—that secures for that sacrifice its eternally vitalising force. Without the assurance which this gives, man is to a great extent thrown back upon his own resources of spiritual strength. He sees the goal, but is left to attain it by his own efforts. This may result in a toughening of the fibre, but it is apt to lead also to repression and over-strain, to a negation, rather than a fulfilment, of life. He needs not only an example but a Presence: not only discipline but inspiration and living fire: sacrifice, discipline and death must be made the means to life. The two points, therefore, which I wish to make here are that excessive emphasis on the human and historic side of Christ's nature leads, first, to a neglect in fact of the meaning of the Resurrection, and, arising out of that, to a curtailment of spiritual power. Too heavy a burden is laid upon unaided human nature.

The second type of thought which I wish to examine emphasises mainly the other side of Christ's nature, the divine and eternal. Out of this arises the whole doctrine of the Logos, the eternal Word expressed once in space and time, and now for ever one with the Father. This

view supplies the assurance that the other lacked of a continual source of power and inspiration for man to draw upon. But out of the very richness and profundity of the conception a difficulty arises. If Christ, having performed the Act of Mediation, is now one with the Father eternally, does not that identification sever him from us just as we may feel that God in His eternal perfection is severed? What part has he in our life now? Do we not need another Mediator? That this is a real difficulty can be seen, I think, from the position assigned to Mary and the saints by the Roman Catholic Church. It is quite evidently felt that there is in them a tenderness and understanding of erring human nature which makes them more accessible than the divine and sinless Christ. And the position of the priesthood illustrates the same idea. The mediator is obscured from our vision by the light of his own perfection, and so other mediators, other ways of approach, must be found.

So, too, on the practical side, the value of Christ's historic experience tends to become obscured. If our minds are filled with the thought of his divine origin, it becomes difficult to conceive of him as sharing our human life on the same terms, confined by our limitations, battling in the half-darkness as we must. To many such a conception appears almost a blasphemy. He was the same, and yet essentially 'different', they say, even from his birth as the muthos relates. And yet, in so far as the difference is emphasised, the story of his struggles and temptations must mean less to us in our own lives. If at every crisis we ascribe to him some divine power beyond our own reach, that triumphant sinlessness becomes a mockery instead of an inspiration. Or at best the temptation and the

agony offer a strange and mystic spectacle in which our experience can have no part and dare not ask it. Divine pain and struggle is something remote from, and other than, our own. We may worship or even pity, but cannot hope to comprehend.

The problem of his humanity is posed in its acutest form when we ask the question 'Could Christ have sinned?' Many will say that, if he could, he was not God. Yet we must still insist that, however shocking it may be to maintain that Christ was liable to sin, the New Testament explicitly states that he was tempted, and nothing short of liability to sin can make temptation a reality. Again, it seems difficult to conceive of the purpose of the Incarnation, if the process stops short just where our human life is most beset with difficulties. It looks like a failure of love—it looks like fear, if we are to assert that Christ refused to shoulder, or could not shoulder, this our last and heaviest burden. And suppose we admit that Christ could have sinned, what does that involve? Surely no more than this: that at every stage in his life alternatives lay before him, both of which were good, but one better than the other, and he was free to choose the less good if he wished. If we deny to his humanity that attribute, we leave him little. So we return to our former position that, if the historic experience of Christ is to have value for us, it must be of such a nature as we can comprehend and interpret in the light of our own.

But from the orthodox side we are given another answer—that the Incarnation was not a revelation of human nature, but of God's love. The divine purpose of redemption does not demand for its fulfilment that Christ should be liable to sin: we are saved by the

spectacle of God suffering and dying in human form, which awakens responsive love in us. The positive side of this reply is gloriously true: the revelation of love given in the Incarnation has throughout the ages kindled men's devotion and enthralled their hearts. But we urge that the proof of that love was strength laid by and weakness—our weakness—undertaken. We cannot say that that weakness was confined merely to physical conditions, and maintain that there was in the Child from the beginning the full knowledge and purpose which we ascribe to God. For physical conditions are the most easily conquered of all our limitations: he must have shared, too, the ignorance and blindness, the conditions of growth incidental to birth in human form. We have already dwelt upon this point—that the Incarnation, to carry with it its full meaning and redemptive force, must have been complete; the revelation of love is not otherwise perfect. And there is a further point which we have also indicated previously. Unless we can say that we are given a revelation of the possibilities of human life as we know it, we rob the gospel of its message of hope; the perfect life which we see in Christ is for ever beyond our reach; we cannot take it as an example. But the whole message of the Gospels seems to be that Christ is offering us a pattern of life and urging us to make it our own. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect'—and the mirror of the Father is the Son.

We see, then, that in this type of thought, which concentrates upon the eternal and divine nature of Christ, the completeness of his Incarnation in human form seems to be denied, and the message of hope which that offers weakened.

It is clear that, if the Incarnation is to carry with it

its full force and spiritual significance, we must combine in one conception these two types of thought—that which emphasises the historic experience of Christ and that which dwells upon his eternal and divine nature. The problem is not only to hold them together, but to conceive of them as organically linked and mutually interdependent. We need to feel that the historic life of Christ is essential to his divine and eternal nature, that his divinity illuminates and enriches that life but does not place it beyond the scope of our own experience. A way of approach has already been suggested. God is the ultimate Reality, universal and all-comprehending, that waits to be known. But we can only know Him as personality, and He is therefore revealed to us in the historic Jesus. Here we see personality at its richest and fullest, possessing in supreme measure those two attributes of universality and individuality or one-ness. The stress which had been laid upon the universal character of God had seemed to imply His separation from us. In Christ that universality (a character which is developed in another essay of this book) was expressed in one single human form, and thereby brought within our human comprehension. The historic life of Jesus could not have been perfect, had it not expressed the universality of God; and we could never have known the universality of God, unless it had been expressed for us in one single human person.

But it is important to grasp the character of myth as distinct from mere historic record. For a myth, to have meaning, must describe not merely a single act but a process perpetually operating. It is not merely fact but also the symbol of a law, and herein lies its significance. Taken as mere story, the Christian muthos, as a record of the mediatorial functions of Christ—

initiated in the Incarnation, fulfilled in the life that ended upon the Cross, and consummated in the Resurrection—is profound and illuminating enough. There is a tendency to rest in the inexhaustible significance of these facts as facts, without pursuing what I can only clumsily call the mythological meaning, the timeless reverberations of these facts in time, the march of a drama without beginning and without end, whose eternal truth is signified forth for our finite comprehension between these points of history. And indeed in this simple reading of the story we are only doing what the myth invites us to do, unconsciously receiving through the facts the eternal truth which alone can give them value. But we cannot stop there, for the mind continually presses on to enrich its apprehension by the conscious realisation of values. So in the facts of the Incarnation, the Atonement and the Resurrection we are given a glimpse of the purposes of God,—creative, redemptive and glorifying—which neither began nor ended in the first century of what Christendom has taken for a new era; and for their fruition we must look, not merely to the Son of Mary of Nazareth, but to the whole of humanity whom he represents and consummates.

The Incarnation, then, is not to be conceived of as a single act, but as an eternal law for ever finding realisation in history, the Word for ever becoming flesh. That is to say that all living souls, if not all finite existence, are God expressed in finite terms in a measure approaching that of Christ's revelation of God. His historic experience is not unique in kind in the sense that nothing approaching it ever happened before or could ever happen again—it is an instance of a process of which our lives are also instances. We, too, are part of the great work of the Incarnation; our flesh is hallowed by

the indwelling spirit of God. This idea is clearly recognised in traditional Christian theology, where the belief that the Personality of God is continually being expressed in human form finds expression in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. But traditional theology does not dwell on the richness of this conception from man's side; for it follows that all human life articulated under finite terms has immeasurable value as potentially the expression of God, and therefore as part of the life of God. The words of St. Paul, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God', are true, not only of the individual Christian soul in secret communion with the Highest, but of the whole of human life as the unfolding and expression of the divine. And we as individuals are invited to find fulfilment and freedom for our lives in deliberate identification with the eternal purposes of God.

But there is a fear in the minds of many that the fullness of this revelation, if admitted, may overwhelm the value of that point in history through which it is shown forth. If all men are expressions of the divine personality of God, where do we place Christ? By admitting the universal significance of the Incarnation we fear lest we may have diminished the unique value of the life of Christ as we read it. We forget here that the fact of history which could illumine for us the whole purpose of creation must needs be unique, or why had we need to wait until the time of revelation? And, more explicitly, we may affirm of Christ that his life is set apart by its perfection. Its conditions are the same as ours, but its triumphant mastery of those conditions raises it beyond. It was this which enabled the Incarnation to flood with light the whole process of creation, which the feeble glimmer of our lives could never have illumined. But this perfection, this triumphant sinless-

ness, is no longer made a mockery to us by Christ's possession of an element which we do not share: it is a revelation of our possibilities. The problem is solved by raising man to God's level, not by bringing Christ down to man's. We say, then, that Christ's realisation and fulfilment of manhood was not an obscuring of the divine nature within him, but its necessary expression and unfolding. And for us, too, the realisation of our humanity is the fulfilment of the divinity within us. The Incarnation offers us a pledge both of the reality of God in the world and of the reality of God's nature in man.

Proceeding further with the facts of the muthos, we come to the Atonement, which provides an answer to the question, What as Mediator does Christ do? How does he reconcile us to God? For man, overwhelmed by the sense of his own sin, feels that he needs some special act on the part of the mediator to bring him near to God. He finds this accomplished in the muthos by the sufferings, and in particular the death, of Christ, which are taken as satisfying the demands of divine justice for our sin. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . and by his stripes we are healed.' This view of atonement is based on a primitive and very deep-rooted sense of justice in human nature—the law which Aeschylus finds —*δράσαντι παθεῖν*, the doer must suffer—and contains a profound religious appeal which no more subtle theory can lightly supersede. Such a view, however, is not acceptable to many at the present day. It has long been felt that it presents a view of God as Judge and Avenger which is incompatible with our view of Him as love—this is too familiar to need dwelling upon. But to the younger generation it is not only immoral but

meaningless, because the younger generation does not believe in 'sin'. It believes in folly and futility, meanness and blindness; and equally that, if any redemption of these things is possible, it must be by our own pain. Perhaps belief in sin is a prerogative of the old and wise and optimistic: at any rate no religious doctrine based on a belief expressed in the traditional formulae awakens a response at the present day.

The traditional view, however, provides an essentially mythical explanation, offering men a symbol and a spectacle rather than a theory. Hence it exercises an overwhelmingly strong emotional appeal, and further a very definite influence upon their view of history, that is, of events in space and time. The whole life of Christ on earth is looked upon as a punishment, a curtailing and obscuring of his divine life: he 'emptied himself', we are told; he becomes 'the suffering servant'. This helps to confirm the belief, arising from other sources, that this whole life in the body is a penance and a punishment—whence we have the devil conjoined as third partner with 'the world' and 'the flesh'. Such a view, again, is repugnant to a generation which light-heartedly dismisses the devil, and refuses to condemn the world and the flesh—regarding them perhaps as 'a poor thing, but mine own'. Those of the orthodox point of view, however, look upon the historical element in the life of Christ as a gain to us but a loss to God, and the Act of Mediation as a sacrifice rather than a fulfilment and completion of God's eternal purpose. But from what has been said it follows that history is a necessary element in the divine life, if there is to be any relation between that life and our own.

Is there, then, any sense in which we may say that

Christ was called upon to redeem the world of men by suffering? I think there is. If personality is, as we claim, universal and inclusive, Christ did, by assuming personality, assume also the burden of our guilt and our mistakes. Guiltless himself, he is yet involved in the web of evil which generations have woven, just because he has a part in those generations. Most people would admit some measure of guilt for evils for which in their own lives they could not be held responsible, and they certainly share in the consequences of those evils. We cannot isolate our own lives from the lives of others or speak of them as separate. The maintenance of our physical life—our food and clothing—depends upon the work of countless other human beings; and an even closer degree of dependence—a real solidarity—exists between our minds and theirs. Our spiritual life includes and is the spiritual life of countless others.

This being so, there is one guilt upon all the human race: and this Christ, by becoming a member of the human race, shares. How is that guilt to be redeemed? Surely there is only the way of suffering—not because an inscrutable Providence, less kind than mortals, decrees a blind payment of pain for pain, but because God is love. There must be pain in the recognition of evil, and pain in the effort to overcome. Therefore love must suffer and lay down its life. This is the supreme revelation of God given us in Christ. We should never have guessed at the meaning of this creative and reforming love had we not beheld the redemptive suffering of the Cross, where God's heart broke for the world. There we see God by pain redeeming the world: we see good, because it is good, crucified by evil, and out of death life springing and hope for ever. And this we know is more than a single act of history; it is a process illuminated

once and for all by that act—the steadfast and continuous purpose of God.

In this supreme revelation of Love we are given an answer to the whole problem of pain. Or perhaps not an answer, but a meaning and a light. For we are invited by pain to take our part in the world's redemption. Here there is no intellectual solution of the problem: the satisfaction offered us is of another order; we are shown a life that works and suffers to deliver the world from evil, and we are called upon to share it. So St. Paul speaks of filling up 'that which is lacking—*τὰ ὑστερώματα*—of the afflictions of Christ'. As the divine Spirit endlessly takes on flesh and dwells not only amongst us but in us, so the work of atonement challenges us all, and explains and sanctifies our suffering—and this we see in the light that streams from the Cross.

And what of the Resurrection and Ascension? Here, too, we may discern a purpose eternally being brought to pass, a purpose that sweeps us in to aid in its fulfilment. Christ, we are told, having passed through the heavens, 'ever liveth to make intercession for us'. His work of atonement is not ended, but in the light of his historic experience he strives in God for man, and as our great High Priest endlessly presents our human prayers to God. As in history he interpreted God to us, so in eternity he interprets us to God. That historic experience, far from being a loss, was an enrichment of the life of God, and by it the life of man was once and for ever lifted up into God. We conceive of the spirit of Christ as eternally present in God, and yet because he is Man, as one of us—capable of realising our needs as he realised them on earth and presenting them to the Father. His work of mediation has no end. It is for this that our prayers are addressed to the Father in his

name: in the interchange possible between us and God he is a living active link. We do not say that prayer to God is only possible through Christ. If God is as we conceive Him, access to Him was always open to man. But man has set barriers between himself and God, the barriers of sin and of his own realisation of sin. He has always been afraid of direct approach to God. We are in God; He holds us all in His thought; and yet we feel cut off from Him, both by the web of evil round our feet which we and generations before us have helped to weave, and also by the very conditions of our human nature. The old fancy that puts heaven in the sky beyond our sight expresses this. We give to God a different dwelling-place because we feel that He is 'different'. And yet how paradoxical this is. For prayer must involve union as well as separation, otherwise no intercourse could be possible. This is true both of human intercourse and of converse between man and God. As we said before, converse or communion is nothing but the interpenetration of spirits. On the other hand, without some sense of separation there is no motive for seeking intercourse. The address of one spirit to another, whether human or divine, is an effort to overcome a barrier—to arrive at a state of communion which in itself is a necessary preliminary to the attainment of our desire. It is Meno's paradoxical proof of the impossibility of knowledge under another form.[1] For either we are separated from another, when converse is impossible, or we are united, when it is unnecessary. And so of perfect and holy spirits we can hardly say that they have need of prayer,

[1] The dilemma propounded to Socrates by Meno was as follows: 'It is not possible for man to seek either what he knows or what he does not know. He would not seek for what he knows, because he knows it and such an one has no need to search; nor again for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for' (Meno 80 *e*). The problem is identical.

because all their conscious life is a part of the life of God. For the rest of us the paradox is solved in experience inasmuch as we are in God and yet separated from Him; but that separation looms larger in our thought than our union with Him. False thinking and wrong action have continued to erect barriers both between man and man and between man and God, which in this world are no less operative because they are unreal. To shatter them we need the mediation of Christ, who knows no barriers between himself and God, and who is also more completely one with us than we are with one another because of the universal range of a spirit unfettered by falseness. He lifts us up to God in himself. This is the message of the Resurrection —Christ eternally rising from the dead and therein raising all humanity. And again an active share in the work awaits us according to the familiar teaching of the Church. We too must rise to God and by intercession assist in the raising of humanity.

We have seen how in the development of the religious consciousness there emerges out of a higher and more spiritualised conception of God, and out of the longing for union with Him which is the mainspring of the religious life, the need for a mediator who shall supply the link and bridge the distance between God and Man. And we have seen how in the Christian muthos this need is met by the birth and life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, historic facts symbolising and revealing the ageless processes of God. But in tracing the significance of those facts, a new truth has emerged—that Christ typifies in himself the journey mapped out for mankind,—that these mediatory functions are in very truth shared by all humanity as it treads the road to God. In men the Word becomes flesh, men share the

life of God and the redemptive agonies of love, men themselves approach God and present the needs of men, and by their intercession bring the world nearer to God and conquer the lurking death of separation from Him. Is the muthos then needed no longer, and has Christ finished his work? Rather, the muthos stands as illumination for ever; and as for the work of Christ, if we say that humanity has a share in that work, we do not thereby affirm that his intercession is no longer needed, but rather that without us his work cannot be accomplished. Perhaps the old figure of the spiritual Church as the Body of Christ will serve us here, and St. Paul's hope of the time when 'we all attain unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'. In that vision of humanity grown to its full stature, the stature of Christ, we see Christ not superseded but consummated: his work of mediation transcended and brought to fulfilment.

We return, then, to our original thesis, that Christian truth as 'embodied in a tale' is not static, nor to be apprehended by intellectual effort, nor once seen to be understood. It is a living operative purpose, with which we must identify ourselves if we are to understand it. The one key is a continually enriching experience. 'If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine.' At no point are we offered a final solution; at every point a call and a hope.

καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἆθλον καὶ ἡ ἐλπὶς μεγάλη.

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